

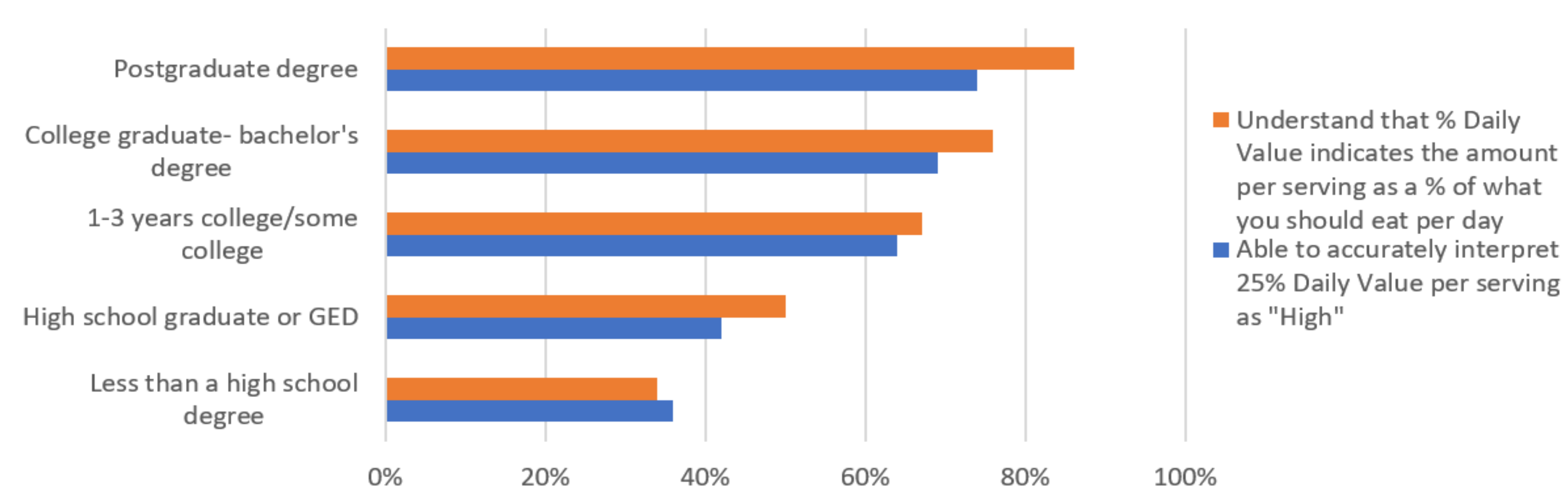
# Progress Towards Front-of-Package Nutrition Labeling in the United States

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- American adults consume 50% more sodium,<sup>1</sup> 40% more added sugars,<sup>2</sup> and 30% more saturated fat per day<sup>1</sup> than the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend,<sup>3</sup> contributing to preventable chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes<sup>4</sup> and heart disease.<sup>5</sup>
- Nutrition Facts labels are important tools for helping people select healthy foods, but only 63% adults understand how to interpret the % Daily Value, with lower rates among those with less education.<sup>6</sup>

Comprehension of % Daily Value, by Educational Attainment



U.S. Food and Drug Administration. *FSANS Explorer: FDA's Food Safety and Nutrition Survey (FSANS)*. <https://fsans-explorer.fda.gov>. Accessed July 31, 2024.

- Front-of-package nutrition labels (FOPNL) use simple words, symbols, colors, or letter grades, and contextualize information from the Nutrition Facts label to facilitate healthy choices.
- In a March 2023 poll of 3,010 consumers, 75% said they would support a policy requiring FOPNL in the U.S.<sup>7</sup>
- 16 countries have already adopted mandatory FOPNL (see *timeline*).<sup>8</sup> Many more have policies under development. In the U.S., a proposed rule for FOPNL is under development at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

## 2. OBJECTIVE & METHODS

This poster summarizes progress towards FOPNL in the U.S. by:

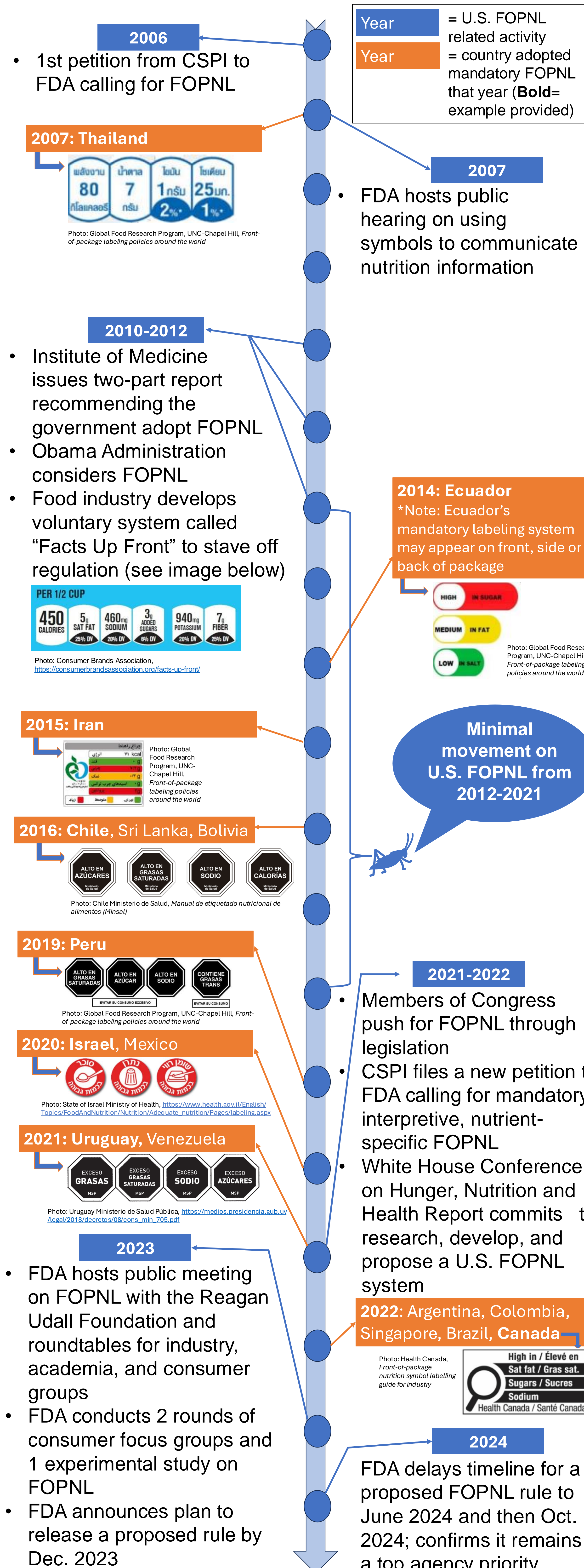
- Providing a historical timeline (*section 3*)
- Summarizing FDA's current work, including schemes under consideration and evidence (or lack thereof) supporting them (*section 4*)
- Reviewing practice implications for nutrition professionals (*section 5*)

## 5. PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS FOR NUTRITION PROFESSIONALS

- The 'High In' FOPNL labels have the strongest evidence base compared to the other labels FDA is considering (see *section 4*)
- Well-designed, mandatory FOPNL would provide consumers with clear, quick, and easily accessible information about key nutrients of concern. This could particularly benefit non-English speakers and those with low literacy/numeracy.<sup>9</sup>
- FOPNL is a useful tool for nutrition education. Nutrition professionals could assess individuals' dietary needs and recommend strategies for using FOPNL to inform food choices. For example, patients with hypertension could be instructed to limit or avoid products labeled "High In Sodium" and patients with type 2 diabetes could be instructed to limit or avoid products labeled "High in Added Sugars" or "High in Saturated Fat."
- FDA is also developing a voluntary "FDA Healthy" logo for foods meeting certain nutrition standards. A food environment with some foods labeled "Healthy" and others labeled "High In" would allow for even simpler nutrition education messages: Look for foods labeled 'Healthy.' Limit foods labeled 'High In.'

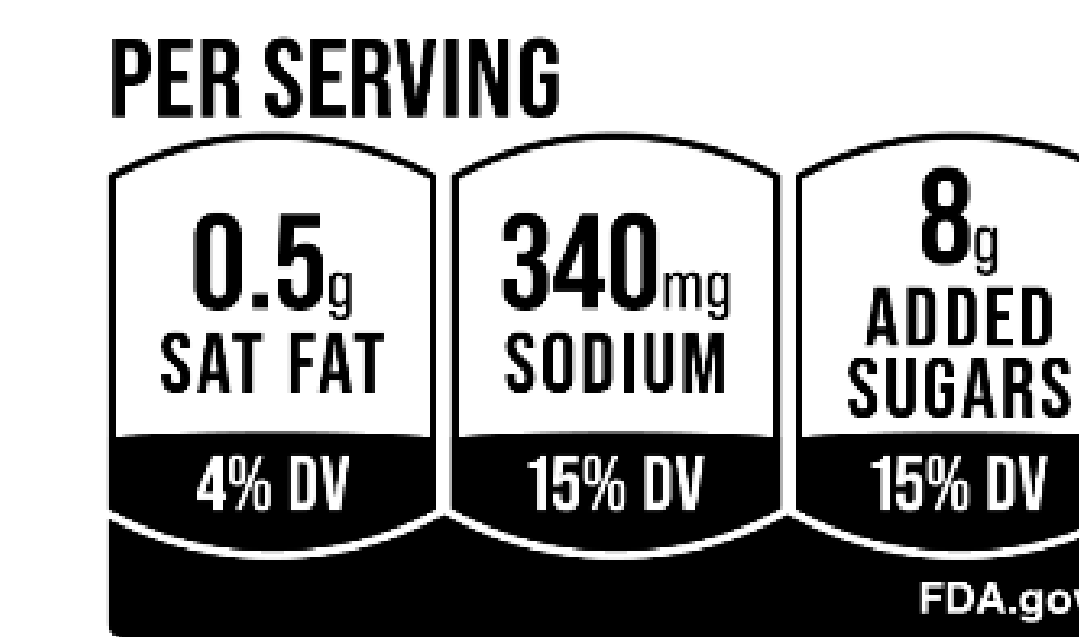


## 3. FOPNL TIMELINE



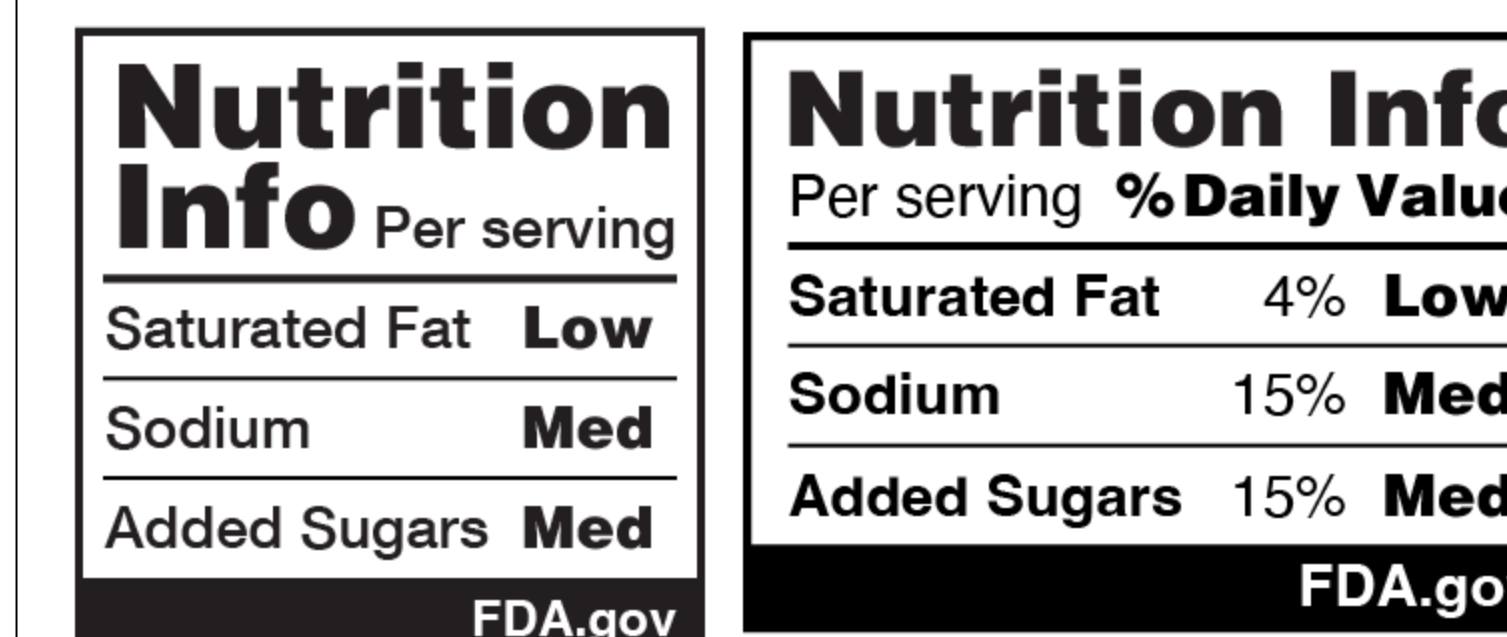
## 4. ARGUMENTS AND EVIDENCE IN FAVOR OR AGAINST FOPNL Schemes FDA is Considering

### Guideline Daily Amount (GDA)

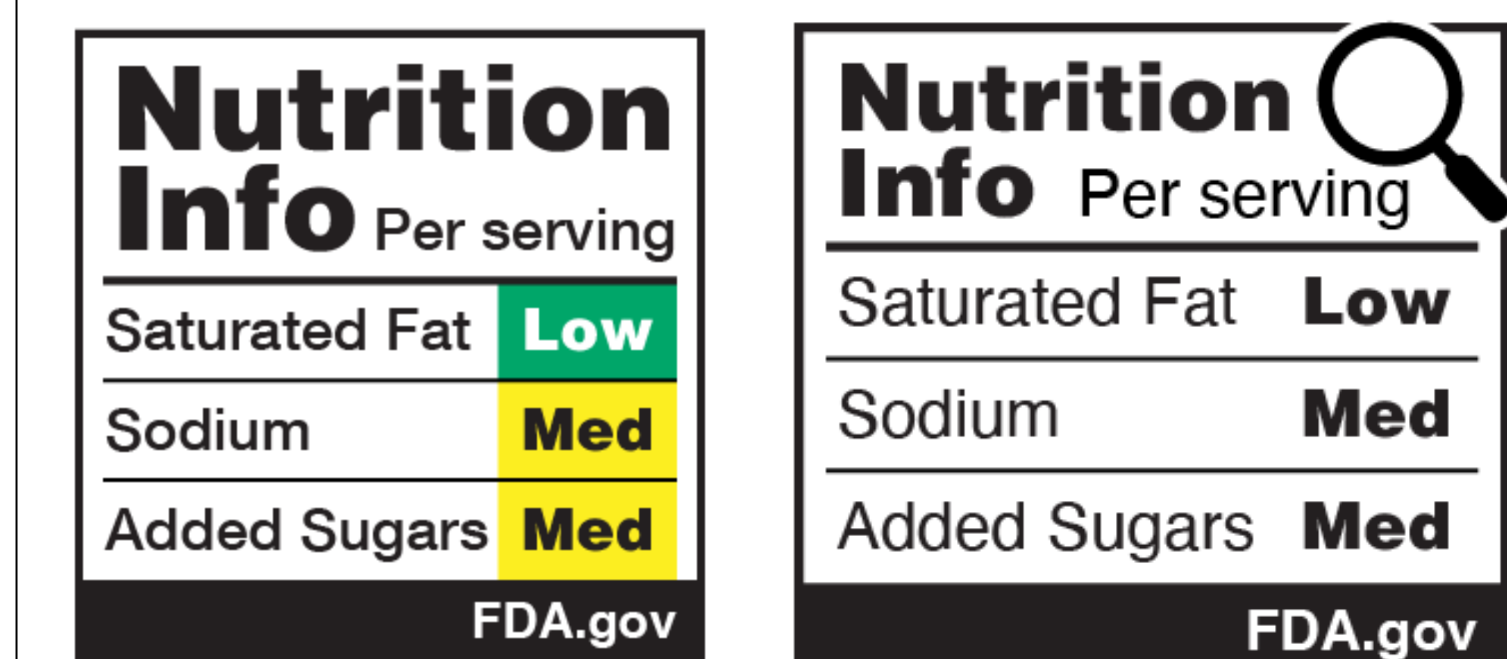


- Already appears on many U.S. foods in the form of the industry-led, voluntary "Facts Up Front" system
- Increases consumer understanding of the nutritional quality of foods compared to no FOPNL<sup>10,11</sup>
- Industry-funded research shows they improve consumers' ability to identify healthier products compared to some types of FOPNL, but only when they include both positive (fiber) and negative (sodium, added sugar, saturated fat) nutrients<sup>12</sup>
- No evidence of impact on selection or purchase of healthier choices compared to no FOPNL
- Less effective at encouraging selection or purchase of healthier choices<sup>13-15</sup> and increasing consumer knowledge/understanding compared to other FOPNL types<sup>16-19</sup>
- Relies on consumer understanding of %DV, which is low<sup>6</sup>

### Nutrition Info (traffic light)

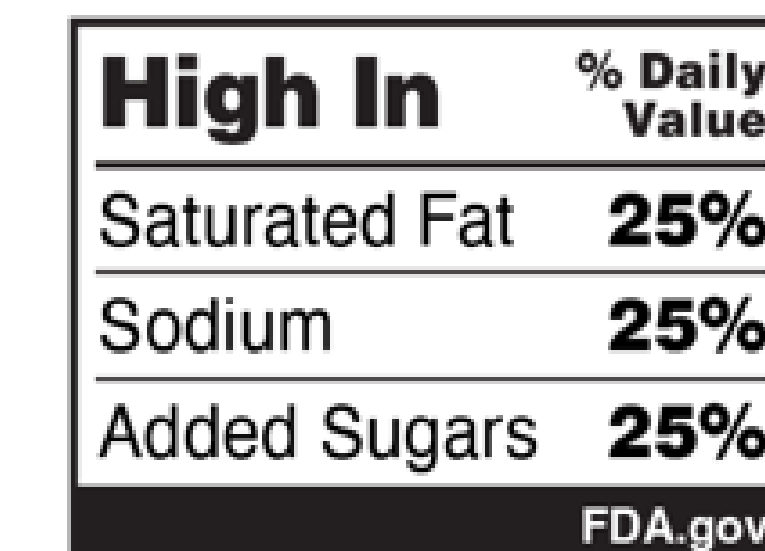
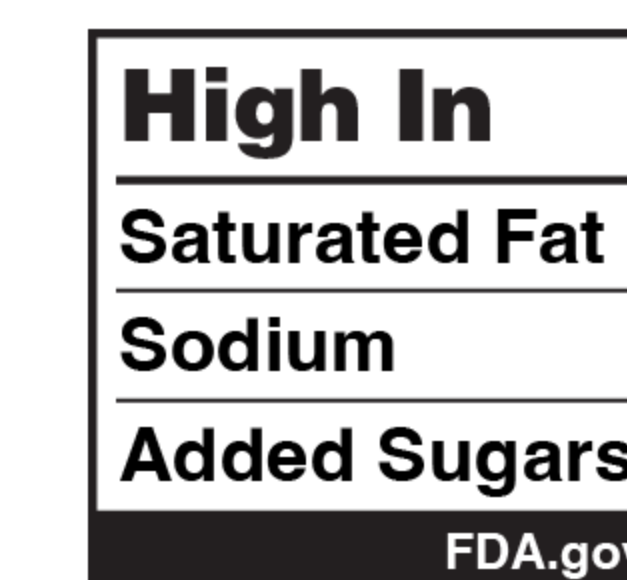


- Improve the nutritional quality of selected/purchased foods (meta-analysis found 50% increase in odds of choosing more-healthy options, 6% decrease in total calories, 13% decrease in saturated fat)<sup>20</sup>
- Associated with reductions of 588 calories, 14g saturated fat, 7g sugar, and 0.8mg sodium in monthly household purchases from labeled, store-brand foods in a UK natural experiment<sup>21</sup>
- Color coding can be useful for helping consumers interpret nutrition information, especially for those with lower nutrition literacy or whose primary language is not English<sup>9</sup>



- Less effective at discouraging purchase of unhealthy choices compared to nutrient warnings<sup>20</sup>
- Studies evaluating Ecuador's traffic light labels found no significant impact on purchases<sup>22, 23</sup>
- Potential for misinterpretation: product labeled low/green are not necessarily healthy (e.g., sugary drinks), nor are products without any high/red (e.g., white bread)

### High In (most similar to nutrient warnings used in other countries)



- Nutrient warnings improve the nutritional quality of selected/purchased foods (meta-analysis found 360% increase in odds of choosing more-healthy options, 35% decrease in odds of choosing less-healthy options, 26% increase in overall healthfulness of selected foods, 13% decrease in total calories)<sup>20</sup>
- Studies evaluating Chile's nutrient warnings found declines in daily per capita calories (-3.5%), calories from sugar (-10.2%), calories from saturated fat (-3.9%), and sodium (-4.7%) purchased from packaged foods, compared to pre-policy trend (all statistically significant)<sup>24</sup> and a statistically significant 15% decrease in the proportion of foods meeting the criteria for 'High in' sugar labels<sup>25</sup> (evidence of industry reformulation)
- Most countries with FOPNL, including major trading partners (Canada and Mexico), have adopted this type of FOPNL
- We are not aware of any evidence-based arguments specifically opposing this type of FOPNL

## REFERENCES



## CONTACT

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