

The Pros and Cons of the Implementation of Octagonal Labeling in Peru



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Opinion

Mr. Editor: On Monday, June 17, 2019, the first stage of the implementation of octagonal labeling, established in Law No. 30021, Law for the Promotion of Healthy Eating for Children and Adolescents; and its Regulation approved by Supreme Decree No. 017-2017-SA [1].

Given this, it is important to point out the pros and cons of this food strategy, in order to improve it and to meet the objective of this Law, to reduce diseases related to overweight, obesity and chronic diseases known as non-communicable [1].

Within the Cons, we Find that

- According to the Advertising Warning Manual [2], there are three sizes of octagons, the largest being 3 cm x 3 cm. As it is not proportional to the size of the packaging, there are packaging on the market where the warning seals do not occupy even 3% of the front face of the package, passing the octagons unnoticed.
- The technical parameters of the nutrients are not consistent with the provisions of the Nutrient Profile Model of the Pan American Health Organization [3], reaching, in some cases, up to triple the limit recommended by this entity.
- It generates confusion in the consumer by founding a perception of "healthy food" in those who do not carry octagon, when due to the content of sugars, sodium, saturated fats or trans fats, they would correspond, however, they are excluded by size the front face of its container or because they are intended for special regimes [4].

d) Unlike other models of nutritional labeling such as NutriScore, recognized by the World Health Organization as it values beneficial and critical nutrients, and based on this, assigns a score [5]; This labeling model only recognizes critical nutrients, resulting in an inaccurate nutritional assessment when evaluating two foods in the same category.

Within the Pros, we have

- Shows the high content of critical nutrients such as sugar and saturated fat present in foods considered "fitness" or "healthy". This is the case of certain whole-grain cookies, cereals, cereal bars, yogurts, among others.
- The controversy of the implementation of octagonal labeling in industrialized products has generated more interested consumers to know if they feed correctly.
- Finally, it is a strategy that, without a doubt, is a first step to strengthen food and nutrition education in Peru.

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