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Division of Dockets Management
Food and Drug Administration
Department of Health and Human Services
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

Comment on FDA's 30-day Notice Regarding Quantitative Research on Front of Package Labeling
(FDA-2023-N-0155)

This comment is submitted by Healthy Food America (HFA). HFA is a NGO that encourages development of food policies that support access to healthy foods and reduce marketing and exposure to unhealthy foods.

We submit this comment to offer strong support for FDA's research to help select a front-of-package labeling (FOPL) scheme that will help consumers quickly and easily identify and choose healthy foods.

Strengths of the proposed study include:

- Large sample of 9,000 participants which will ensure adequate power to detect differences in the effects of different FOPL schemes on participants' ability to select the healthiest/least healthy product in a set. The larger sample should also allow subgroup analysis (e.g., by nutrition literacy and demographic characteristics and we encourage reporting of these subgroup analyses to assess equity impacts of proposed labels.
- Inclusion of nutrients to limit (i.e., sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars), which are linked to health harms and are overconsumed by a majority of people in the United States, in all the schemes.
- Randomized experimental design.
- Separation of nutrients to encourage from those to discourage and inclusion of only the latter.
- Inclusion of questions on respondent perceptions of labels (usability testing), including an open-ended question.

We urge you to retain these study features in the final study design.

We suggest the following to improve the study design:

- Pre-specify a primary study outcome to sharpen study focus and address the multiple comparison statistical issue. We recommend the primary outcome be correct interpretation of which FOPL in a set is the healthiest/least healthy.
- Add an outcome related to purchase intent – i.e., do labels increase intent to purchase healthier products and decrease intent to purchase less healthy products. This a commonly used outcome in FOPL research studies, is correlated with purchase behavior, and assesses the ability of FOPL to move dietary patterns towards healthier ones. Recognizing a product as more or less healthy is an intermediate step in the pathway from seeing labels to improving diet and while a useful metric, is insufficient.
- Test versions of the "High In" FOP scheme that include color (e.g., red font or red highlighting of the nutrients that are "high" (color increases salience of label information), and/or include icons such a colorful exclamation marks triangles with exclamation mark inside, and/or include words (e.g., "Attention" or "Government Notice") to draw more attention to the label and its information.

Thank you for considering these suggestions, and for your commitment to establishing a FOPL system. Our nation's health will benefit.

Sincerely,

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