

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, October 13, 2010
Contact: Jeff Cronin, 202-777-8370, or Stacey Greene, 202-777-8316

Institute of Medicine Pushes Front-of-Package Food Labels *CSPI Says System Should Also Include Added Sugars*

WASHINGTON—A [report from the Institute of Medicine](http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/Examination-of-Front-of-Package-Nutrition-Rating-Systems-and-Symbols-Phase-1-Report.aspx) (<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/Examination-of-Front-of-Package-Nutrition-Rating-Systems-and-Symbols-Phase-1-Report.aspx>) concluded that simplified front-of-package food labeling could help improve Americans' diets and health. That report, which the Center for Science in the Public Interest urged Congress to request, highlighted the importance of listing calories and three problem nutrients—saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium. [CSPI](http://www.cspinet.org/foodlabeling/) (<http://www.cspinet.org/foodlabeling/>) today said that added sugars should also be included on front-of-package labels for at least some foods.

“Unfortunately, without disclosing the amount of added sugars, a soft drink with that labeling would look pretty good because it has no fat and virtually no sodium,” said CSPI executive director Michael F. Jacobson. “One solution would be to disclose calories and just one or two other nutrients, depending on the type of food. Soups, for instance, might focus on calories and sodium. Soda labels should highlight just calories and sugar.”

And rather than highlighting trans fat on package fronts, the Food and Drug Administration should just ban the artificial variety of trans fat, which comes from partially hydrogenated oil, according to CSPI.

“The biggest challenge is to figure out how best to display the information so as to encourage companies to produce and shoppers to choose the most healthful foods,” Jacobson said. “While the British government found that red-yellow-green color coding, or words like high, medium, and low are most consumer-friendly, the food industry will fight tooth and nail to prevent the government from requiring such clear, understandable symbols. Companies don't want their less healthful products clearly labeled as such, but that's the kind of system that would most benefit consumers.”

CSPI [first urged](http://www.cspinet.org/new/200611301.html) (<http://www.cspinet.org/new/200611301.html>) the FDA to consider a front-of-package labeling system in 2006. A year ago, the agency asked the food industry to halt its front-of-package labeling system, [Smart Choices](http://www.cspinet.org/new/200910202.html) (<http://www.cspinet.org/new/200910202.html>). That program's nutrition criteria allowed sugary cereals, such as Froot Loops and some white breads with no whole grains, to bear a Smart Choice icon.

#

The Center for Science in the Public Interest is a nonprofit health advocacy group based in Washington, DC, that focuses on nutrition, food safety, and pro-health alcohol policies. CSPI is supported by the 900,000 U.S. and Canadian subscribers to its Nutrition Action Healthletter and by foundation grants.