

***Paper***

PHN-RES-2017-1109.R3 - Use of added sugars in packaged foods sold in Brazil

***Authors***

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**Added sugars are the most prevalent ingredient in packaged foods sold in Brazil**

Added sugars are sugars and syrups that are added to foods or beverages during processing or preparation. There are several evidences that a high intake of added sugars is associated with an increased risk of several diseases, specifically obesity, cardiovascular disease and dental caries. Consequently, the World Health Organization recommends a low intake of added sugars throughout the life course as well as limiting consumption to less than 10% of the total daily energy intake.

Packaged foods seem to be the main source of added sugars in the world population's diet. In this way, food labelling is a tool for consumers to make informed choices regarding the intake of added sugars. Is this true? In most countries of the world, the nutrition information fact does not show information about sugars. Thus, consumers have only the list of ingredients to identify whether there are (or not) sugars in an industrialized food, without being able to know how much.

In order to know how the added sugars are presented on the food label of packaged foods, we investigated all retail packaged food available for sale in a large Brazilian supermarket. We analysed the ingredients list of 4,539 packaged foods and 71% had at least one type of added sugar. They were the most prevalent ingredient among all analysed foods.

There are added sugars in products like cakes, jam, cookies, powdered chocolate, juice, nectars and fruit drinks, coconut water, granola bars, bread, dairy drinks, fermented milk and yogurt. But the sugars are not only added in sweet food. We also found added sugars in several salty tasting foods, like sausage, hamburger, ham, soup mix, lasagne, seasoning cubes, tomato sauce, pickled vegetables, bacon, mayonnaise and nuts mix. The presence

of added sugars in salty food could lead consumers to intake without knowing, since the presence of sugars in these foods is not expected.

We also identified 179 different terms for added sugars in these packaged foods. The most common types of added sugars in ingredients lists were sugar, maltodextrin, and glucose syrup. Other examples of terms for added sugars were invert sugar, dextrose, fructose, honey, molasses, corn syrup, fruit and vegetable juice concentrates, and fruit sauces. This variety of names may hamper the added sugars identification on food labels by consumers.

For this reason, we believe that the amount of added sugars should be stated on nutrition information labels. Moreover, we recommend to group sugar-based ingredients under a category with the generic name of 'sugar' to facilitate identification in the ingredient list, as in Canadian legislation. Such initiative could promote a reduction in the consumption of added sugars by consumers and perhaps encourage manufacturers to modify product formulations.

Lastly, we highlight the major importance of food labelling in allowing consumers to make informed food choices and avoid the excessive consumption of sugars.