

Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS  
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 9344



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Introduced by Representative CAMILLE A. VILLAR

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AN ACT  
TO PRESCRIBE NUTRITION LABELING FOR FOOD PRODUCTS,  
PROVIDING FRAMEWORK FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION AND FOR OTHER  
PURPOSES

*Explanatory Note*

The 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that the State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them" (Article II, Section 15).

In the Philippines, as well as in other countries in the Southeast Asian region, there is no mandatory nutrition labeling or requirement for food<sup>1</sup>, but relies solely on the voluntary inclusion by manufacturers, packagers or distributors should indicate the nutritional value on the labels of food products being sold in the market to the public.

Although there are rules and regulations being implemented by health and nutrition agencies of the government as regards food labeling to ensure food safety and control, many pre-packed food being sold for retail still lack nutritional value labels.

This measure is being pushed to promote a healthy lifestyle and support public health initiatives among Filipinos as it would mandate an easy-to-read label on the commodity, which bears its nutritional content and separate from the label

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<sup>1</sup> "What is in your food label?" Food and Nutrition Research Institute.  
<https://www.fnri.dost.gov.ph/index.php/publications/writers-pool-corner/57-food-and-nutrition/85-what-is-in-your-food-label>

identifying the commodity and the name and place of business of the manufacturer, packager, or distributor. As such, the public may be able to properly identify which food products are good for their health or not based on the information provided on the label.

Accurate food also labeling promotes transparency as it provides consumers with vital nutritional information of food that they buy. This practice would also ensure their safety and health when it comes to food consumption, as well as possible ingredients which may be potentially toxic to the consumer and safe handling practices for food storage.

Proper food labeling is all the more important to be immediately implemented in order to address undernutrition—as it is, and has always been, a serious problem in the Philippines<sup>2</sup>. For nearly thirty years, there have been almost no improvements in the prevalence of undernutrition in the Philippines. One in three children (29%) younger than five years old suffered from stunting (2019), being small in size for their age.

According to a World Bank study in 2021, the Philippines was ranked fifth among countries in the East Asia and Pacific region with the highest prevalence of stunting and was among the 10 countries in the world with the highest number of stunted children.

There are regions with levels of stunting that exceed 40% of the population. In Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, 45% of children below five are stunted; in Region IV-A, 41%; Bicol Region, 40%; Western Visayas, 40%, and in the south-central Mindanao or Region XII, 40%.

Micronutrient undernutrition is also highly prevalent in the Philippines: 38% among infants six to 11 months old; 26% among children 12–23 months; and 20% of pregnant women are anemic. Nearly 17% of children aged 6–59 months suffered from vitamin A deficiency (2018), of which children aged 12–24 months had the highest prevalence (22%) followed by children aged six to 12 months (18%).

The burden on the Philippine economy brought by childhood undernutrition was estimated at US\$4.4 billion, or 1.5% of the country's gross domestic product, in 2015.

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<sup>2</sup> "Undernutrition in the Philippines: Scale, Scope, and Opportunities for Nutrition Policy and Programming." 15 June 2021. The World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/philippines/publication/-key-findings-undernutrition-in-the-philippines>

Researchers from the multilateral lending agency also noted that one of the key determinants of undernutrition in the country is inadequate or inappropriate food.

Under the measure, the label should contain the following: number of servings or other units of measure per container; the total number of calories derived from any source, and derived from the total fat.

It should also include the amount of the following nutrients in each serving size or other unit of measurement of food: total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrates, complex carbohydrates, sugars, dietary fiber, and total protein.

However, if a food contains insignificant nutritional value, as determined by the Bureau of Food and Drugs, of all the nutrients required to be listed in the label or labeling of food shall not apply to such food if the label, labeling, or advertising of such food does not make any claim with respect to the nutritive value of such food.

In view of the foregoing, urgent approval of this bill is requested.

*Camille A. Villar*  
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*Be it enacted by the House of Representatives and Senate of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

Section 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "*Philippine Nutrition Labeling Act of 2023.*"

Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to ensure that consumers have access to accurate information as to the nutritional contents of food and food products to facilitate value comparison and promote a free market economy.

Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* -

- a. *Label* means any written, printed, or graphic matter affixed to any consumer commodity or affixed to or appearing upon a package containing any consumer commodity.
- b. *Package* means any container or wrapping in which any consumer commodity is enclosed for use in the delivery or display of that consumer commodity to retail purchasers but does not include -
  - i. Shipping containers or wrapping used solely for the transportation of any consumer commodity in bulk or in quantity to manufacturers, packers, or processors, or to wholesale or retail distributors thereof; or

- ii. Shipping containers or outer wrappings used by retailers to ship and deliver any commodity to retail customers if such containers and wrappings bear no printed matter pertaining to any particular commodity.
- c. *Food* means any material usually of plant or animal origin, containing or consisting of essential body nutrients, that must be taken in or assimilated by a person as nourishment to maintain life and growth.

*Sec. 4. Requirements of Labeling. -*

- a. The commodity shall bear a label specifying the identity of the commodity and the name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor.
- b. The separate label statement of nutritional content shall appear in its conspicuous and easily legible type in distinct contrast by typography, layout, color, embossing, or molding with other matter on the package.
- c. The label shall also contain the following:
  - i. number of servings or other units of measure per container;
  - ii. the total number of calories derived from any source, and derived from the total fat;
  - iii. The amount of the following nutrients in each serving size or other unit of measurement of food –  
  
“Total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrates, complex carbohydrates, sugars, dietary fiber, and total protein”
  - iv. any vitamin, mineral, or other nutrient required to be placed on the label or labeling of food if it is determined that such information will assist consumers in maintaining healthy dietary practices.
- d. If a food contains insignificant amounts, as determined by the Bureau of Food and Drugs, of all the nutrients required to be listed in the label or labeling of food, the requirements of such shall not apply to such food if the label, labeling, or advertising of such food does not make any claim with respect to the nutritive value of such food.

- e. No packaged consumer commodity shall be distributed or caused to be distributed in commerce unless it conforms with the regulations set by this Act and established by the Bureau of Food and Drugs

Sec. 5. *Punishable Acts.* -

- a. It shall be unlawful for any person engaged in the packaging or labeling of any consumer commodity for distribution in commerce, or for any person engaged in the distribution in commerce of any packaged or labeled consumer commodity, to distribute or to cause to be distributed in commerce any such commodity if such commodity is contained in a package, or if there is affixed to that commodity a label, which does not conform to the provisions of this Act and of regulations promulgated under the authority of this Act.
- b. This prohibition shall not apply to persons engaged in the business as wholesale or retail distributors of consumer commodities except to the extent that such persons (1) are engaged in the packaging or labeling of such commodities, or (2) prescribe or specify by any means the manner in which such commodities are packaged or labeled.

Sec. 6. *Consumer Education.* - The Secretary of the Department of Health with the Bureau of Food and Drugs shall carry out activities which educate consumers about:

- a. the availability of nutrition information in the label or labeling of food; and:
- b. the importance of that information in maintaining healthy dietary practices.

Sec. 7. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part hereof, is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

Sec. 8. *Repealing Clause.* - Any law presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule of regulation contrary to, or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

Sec. 9. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in at least two newspapers of general publication.

*Approved,*