2 November 2026

ICBA Statement Regarding WHO's Proposed Food Profiling Model

The International Council of Beverages Associations (ICBA) supports evidence-based global action to achieve healthy diets. Our members make the beverages that people around the world enjoy every day, and we have reduced sugar and calories in our beverages through reformulation, smaller portions, and transforming offerings of low- and no-calorie beverages.

ICBA Executive Director Katherine Loatman commented:

"WHO's proposed food profiling model aims for governments to tax and restrict about 98% of packaged food and beverages - without any evidence that its proposed nutrient and ingredient triggers or recommended actions will improve public health. Governments and experts should carefully consider whether such a sweeping impact is supported by sound science.

The example of sugar-sweetened beverages demonstrates the critical importance of advancing evidence-based approaches demonstrated to improve health. Whereas sugar-sweetened beverage taxes have not been shown to reduce obesity anywhere in the world, reformulation has proven an effective approach to reduce sugar and calories in support of healthy diets.

The WHO itself includes reformulation, not taxes, among its most effective policies to improve diets ("Best Buys"). Inexplicably, this new proposal could penalize the use of low- and no-calorie sweeteners that enable beverage reformulation."

ICBA's Principles on Nutrition Policy, adopted in 2026 and submitted for reference to the November 2026 Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU), will guide our response to the WHO's proposal.

Our principles call for:

- Nutrition policies grounded in nutrition science and the totality of the evidence.
- Regulatory frameworks that protect consumer safety, promote transparency, and enable informed choice.
- Collaborative, evidence-based approaches that advance public health without undermining affordability, access, food security, or innovation.

Applying those principles, we encourage WHO and governments to:

Develop policies based on the nutritional content of foods, not how they are made. WHO's proposal is based on one classification system that is not supported by high-quality evidence or scientific consensus, and WHO's materials acknowledge that "subjective decisions can lead to misclassification of individual products" within this system.

Policy that regulates based on processing or cherry-picks individual ingredients as "markers" of processing is not consistent with the totality of nutrition science and is not likely to advance healthy diets.

Acknowledge that policy should not be based on low quality and limited scientific evidence. Numerous authorities, including the UK Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, the French Food Safety Authority, the German Nutrition Society, Nordic Nutrition Recommendations, and the Spanish Food Safety and Nutrition Agency, have found the evidence associating food processing with health outcomes too weak and limited on which to base policy.

Protect access and affordability. Imposing taxes on everyday foods and drinks will most burden households with the least room in their budgets during a time when many around the world are struggling with the cost of living. Research on sugar-sweetened beverage taxes does not establish that such taxes improve health outcomes.

Encourage reformulation. WHO ranks reformulation among its most effective interventions. Yet, this new model claims that ingredient "markers" like low- and no-calorie sweeteners, rather than nutritional value of foods and overall diets, should trigger regulation and taxes.

We also urge early, transparent consultation with all affected parties, including the food and beverage sector, in line with good regulatory practice. ICBA will review the proposed model closely, engage through the appropriate channels, and stand ready to work with WHO and governments on policies that work for health and for families.

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The International Council of Beverages Associations (ICBA) is an international nongovernmental organization established in 1995 that represents the interests of the worldwide non-alcoholic beverage industry. The members of ICBA include national and regional beverage associations, as well as international beverage companies that operate in more than 200 countries and territories and produce, distribute, and sell a variety of non-alcoholic sparkling and still beverages, including soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, bottled waters, flavored and/or enhanced waters, ready-to-drink teas and coffees, 100% fruit or vegetable juices, nectars and juice drinks, and dairy-based beverages.

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