Society & Social Justice · GS - II

Evaluate the role of front-of-pack nutritional warning labels in addressing India's growing burden of diet-related non-communicable diseases.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 26/11/2026	GS - II	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Nutritional literacy, consumer right to information, FSSAI, food regulation, NCDs, behavioural change, corporate accountability, public health

Model Answer

India faces a growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disorders. Excessive consumption of foods high in sugar, salt and unhealthy fats is an important modifiable risk factor.

Public Health Significance of Warning Labels

1. **Informed decision-making:** Prominent front-of-pack warnings simplify nutritional information and help consumers identify products containing excessive quantities of critical nutrients.
2. **Behavioural intervention:** Easily recognisable symbols can influence purchasing decisions more effectively than lengthy nutritional tables.
3. **Health equity:** Simple warnings can benefit consumers with limited nutritional literacy, including those unable to interpret complex food labels.
4. **Industry accountability:** Mandatory labelling can encourage manufacturers to reformulate products by reducing excessive sugar, salt and unhealthy fats.

Implementation Challenges

1. **Consumer awareness:** Warning symbols must be supported by public education in regional languages.

2. **Industry resistance:** Manufacturers may oppose stricter labelling requirements because of compliance costs and potential effects on sales.
3. **Regulatory enforcement:** FSSAI needs adequate monitoring, standardised testing and penalties for misleading declarations.
4. **Limited impact:** Labelling alone cannot overcome affordability constraints, aggressive marketing, unhealthy food environments and inadequate access to nutritious alternatives.

Towards a Comprehensive Strategy

Front-of-pack warnings should complement school nutrition education, restrictions on misleading advertisements, healthier public procurement and improved access to affordable nutritious food.

The FSSAI must ensure scientific thresholds, uniform presentation and transparent enforcement.

Conclusion

Nutritional warning labels are an important preventive public-health instrument. Their effectiveness, however, depends on combining consumer awareness with responsible food-industry practices and broader nutrition policies.

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