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SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS FOR HEALTHY DIETS IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

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UNHEALTHY DIETS & EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY:

Is the problem the policy, or the evidence?

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Unhealthy Diets & Evidence-based policy

Outline

- Global trends in diet quality & obesity
- Nutrition governance
- The challenge of evidence-based policy-making
- Current trends and evidence in policy-making

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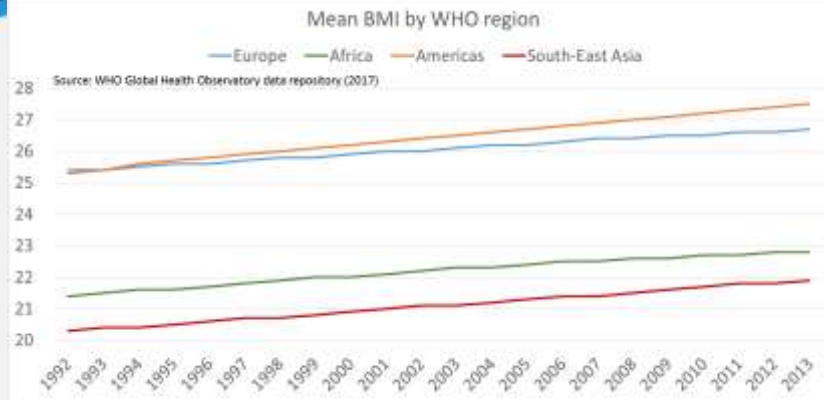
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Global trends



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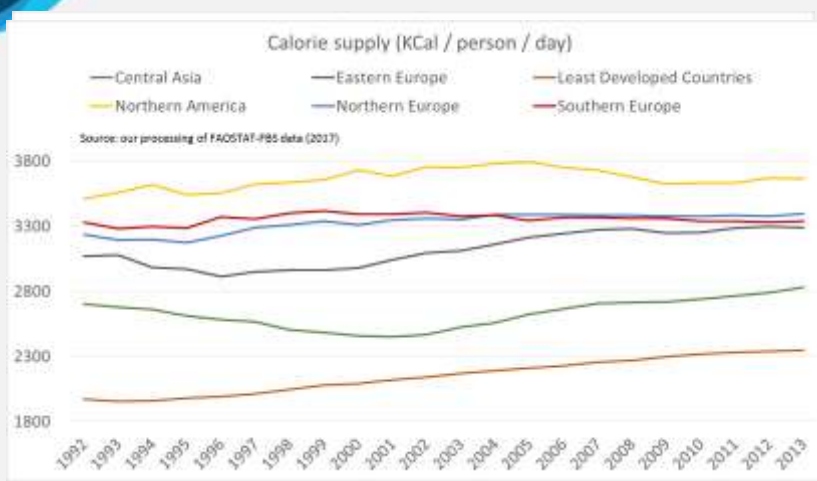


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Europe & Central Asia



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Nutrition governance: challenges

- The number of interventions aimed at improving diet quality through enhanced information or «market» interventions is growing fast across the World
- Measures like taxes or (voluntary) nutrient standards that were not common outside the US are spreading in Europe and elsewhere
- The history of anti-obesity policies is not a history of successful policies
- Food policies have multiple targets, not always aligned (e.g. farm support, industry competitiveness, sustainability...)
- The effectiveness of various types of measures is still debated – and even effective policies seem to have a small impact on behaviours

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Building the evidence

Recent review of evaluations (forthcoming FAO technical note):

- Policies implemented (or continued) at national level after 2000
- Evaluation must be ex post and on observational data
- There is some "counterfactual" consideration

Policy	Adoption levels / trends	Ex post evidence on national policies			
		Availab.	Studies identified	Direction	Strength
Supporting more informed choice					
Advertising restrictions	Low (higher for voluntary codes)	Limited	12	Comprehensive regulation effective, other ineffective	Suggestive, short-term
Information campaigns	High and rising	High	10	Effective	Strong
Nutrition education	Medium (rising)	Very scarce	0	NA	NA
Labelling regulations	High and rising	Medium	13	Effective in inducing reformulation, less on intakes	Suggestive
Changing the market environment					
Fiscal measures	High and rising	High	16	Effective in changing prices and consumption	Suggestive / strong
School environment	High and rising	High	18	Effective in changing school behaviours, but not overall diet	Suggestive / strong
Mandatory nutrition standards	Medium (rising)	Scarce	3	Good compliance, effective in reducing unhealthy nutrients	Suggestive
Voluntary nutrition standards	High and rising	High	5	Effective	Suggestive
Accessibility measures	Low (mainly local)	Scarce	3	Mixed	Suggestive

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Key messages

- The evidence basis is growing with the number of policies, but the number of rigorous ex-post evaluations is still small
- We have a history of 'unsuccessful' policies, but we know little about why they don't work (behavioral dimension understated? dominance of market forces? declining impact over longer horizons?)
- The main issue for evaluations is the lack of (long-term longitudinal) data
- There is strong suggestive evidence that combination of policies and multi-level policies – if **aligned** - are more likely to reach the target, but the data and the evaluation toolbox are limited in this respect

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Policy recommendations

- Better governance needs better data and stronger evaluation efforts: **invest in ex-post evidence gathering**
- Adequate evaluation and monitoring requires **better data**:
 - **Longitudinal and stable** (longer term effects)
 - **Multiple domains**, not only nutrition (multi-level policies)
 - **Integrate environments & behavioral dimension**
- Place a stronger focus on **unsuccessful measures**:
 - Why? When? Where?

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