



Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition • FSN Forum

TOPIC NOTE

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➔ www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/overweight_obesity

Are there any successful policies and programmes to fight overweight and obesity?

Dear colleagues:

We are delighted to invite you to an online discussion on successful policies and programmes to fight overweight and obesity. Please read the background information and answer the discussion questions included below.



Brief context for the discussion forum

The formulation and implementation of public policies and programmes to prevent, monitor and reduce overweight and obesity pose a challenge, both for Latin America and the Caribbean and for most regions in the world.

Overweight and obesity are considered a severe public health issue in many countries, requiring urgent measures at all levels, including the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of adequate policies and programmes. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 1.9 billion adults (over the age of 18) were overweight in 2014, and 600 million were obese. Furthermore, 42 million children under five were overweight or obese in 2013.

To ensure a successful implementation of public policies and programmes, these should be based on scientific evidence and/or proven interventions. However, there is little information on the results and impact of policies and programmes addressing these issues in a comprehensive and holistic manner.

In response to this shortfall, the "Study of international evidence of obesity reduction: lessons learned from case studies" ("*Estudio de evidencia internacional en la reducción de obesidad: Lecciones aprendidas de estudios de caso*"), is being conducted by FAO and the Catholic University of Chile (known in Spanish as PUC), in consultation with the WHO. The study has two major goals:

- Gathering and describing the major and most effective existing policies and programmes addressing obesity and overweight at international level.
- Making the outcomes available to parliamentarians and decision makers (in public policies), with the aim of better inform the design and implementation of initiatives effectively addressing overweight and obesity in the region.

The study is being conducted now and has identified several interventions grouped into the following categories: **access** (providing nutritious food to vulnerable groups, prohibiting junk food in schools and other public institutions), **education** (dietary guidelines, nutrition education in the school context, promoting physical activity, public campaigns promoting healthy diets, nutritional labelling, restrictions on junk food advertising), **supply** (increasing the supply of healthy food in areas like “food swamps” and “food desserts”, facilitating short marketing circuits, improving the nutritional quality of food products) and **economic** (taxes, subsidies and price changes). In order to strengthen the efforts made so far, this forum and your participation will be crucial in gathering more evidence, experiences of good practices and success stories reflecting the work at the global, regional and national area in this field.

This is why we invite you to answer one or more of the following questions, and to share your knowledge about successful policies and programmes to fight overweight and obesity. Please, bear in mind that we are particularly interested in using this platform to gather and share examples of initiatives implemented by governments, or other institutions in your country or in other countries.

Discussion questions

According to your experience and/or knowledge:

1. Which policies and/or programmes have been implemented in your country or region to prevent overweight and obesity? Please consider:
 - National/local policies and initiatives (i.e. nutritional labelling, food taxes/subsidies, promoting the consumption of fruits and vegetables, dietary guidelines, policies to promote physical activity, nutritional education in other policies)
 - Interventions and/or programs in community and school environments.
- Note: Please share links, scientific papers and/or documents to enrich your answers.
2. Which of the policies and/or programmes mentioned before have succeeded in reducing overweight and obesity levels? Please complete your answer answering the following queries:
 - What was the target population?
 - In which way were results assessed and/or effectiveness determined? What were the success factors that contributed to the effectiveness?
 - What were the main challenges, constraints and lessons learned?
 3. Finally, which **ELEMENTS ARE CRUCIAL** to effectively support policies, strategies and/or programs targeting overweight and obesity reduction?
 - Please consider elements regarding governance, resources, capacity building, coordination mechanisms, leadership, or information exchange networks, among others.

Please do not hesitate to share your experiences and knowledge on this topic. We look forward to receiving your contributions and working together to strategically overcome this global problem.

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Discussion facilitators