

CODEx ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 3

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEx COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

Forty-eighth Session

Quebec City, Canada

27 October – 1 November 2024

MATTERS OF INTEREST FROM FAO AND WHO

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

Ad hoc Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Risk Assessment of Food Allergens

In response to the requests by CCFL and the Codex Committees on Food Hygiene (CCFH) for scientific advice on food allergens, FAO and WHO convened a series of expert meetings on the risk assessment of food allergens since 2020. Some of the background information on the expert meetings Part 1 priority food allergens¹, Part 2 thresholds for priority food allergens², Part 3 precautionary labelling³, Part 4 exemptions⁴ and Part 5 thresholds for other food allergens⁵ can be found in the previous document for CCFL (CX/FL 23/47/3)⁶.

In March 2023, Part 5 of the expert meeting was convened virtually to work on the thresholds of food allergens that are not on the priority list. The RfDs were derived following the same approach described in Part 2 thresholds for priority food allergens. The recommendations are as below:

Allergenic food	Final recommendation (mg total protein from the allergenic source)
Celery/celeriac	1
Soy	10
Brazil nuts	1
Macadamia (Queensland) nuts	
Pine nuts	
Mustard	1
Lupin	10
Buckwheat	10
Oats	Oat-specific RfD not appropriate

¹ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/94f20662-e4cb-4836-a1ac-9985b24b5268> and <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240042391>

² <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/ef22e408-e924-4ac1-9b19-3e7caa7a651c> and <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240065420>

³ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/2ed0849b-cd11-4c94-881f-d1b41dbc215f> and <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240072510>

⁴ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/2674e59c-59ce-484c-9b57-cbaa32275778> and <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240088924>

⁵ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/163bd3e3-da95-4ad1-b724-7b2e7c5b76dd> and <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240083332>

⁶ https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/jp/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FMeetings%252FCX-714-47%252Ffl47_03e.pdf

Note: Ordered to separate the foods with consensus and final RfD recommendations from those with values for risk management for clarity.

To facilitate the understanding of the outcomes from the ad hoc Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Risk Assessment of Food Allergens, FAO and WHO also condensed the reports into four 2-page brochures⁷.

The 54th session of the CCFH organized a side event on food allergens on 12 March 2024, where FAO and WHO presented the outcomes of the expert meetings to facilitate a better understanding of this topic and deliver the communication from CCFL⁸. CCFH may update *Code of Practice on Allergen Management for Food Business Operators* (CXC 80-2020) to align with the revisions of *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985) undertaken by CCFL⁹.

Joint FAO/WHO update of nutrient requirements for infants and young children from birth through 3 years of age

FAO and WHO last updated vitamin and mineral requirements for all age groups in 2004. Since then, new data have emerged suggesting that requirements for some micronutrients may need to be updated, particularly for infants and young children. Therefore, in part to inform the updating of WHO guidance on complementary feeding and also to contribute to the ongoing work of the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU) in establishing nutrient reference values (NRVs-R) for children aged 6-36 months, FAO and WHO conducted the updating of nutrient intake values for infants and young children from birth through 3 years of age. Nutrient intake values include requirements (e.g. average nutrient requirement [ANR], adequate intake [AI], individual nutrient level [INL_x]) and safe upper levels of intake (ULs). Using data obtained from preparatory work done by WHO, FAO and WHO identified calcium, vitamin D and zinc as the first three priority nutrients to be updated.

The work of updating the FAO/WHO nutrient requirements for calcium, vitamin D and zinc for children 0-3 years of age has been completed. Nine virtual expert meetings were held, and more than 15 systematic reviews and reports were generated, many of which have been published in peer-reviewed journals. Guidance documents are currently being drafted and should be ready for public consultation in Q4 2024.

Other information

UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025

The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 2016, aims to accelerate implementation of the commitments made at the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) in 2014, achieve the global nutrition and diet-related noncommunicable disease (NCD) targets by 2025, and contribute to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The fourth progress report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), compiled by the joint FAO/WHO Secretariat of the Nutrition Decade, was released on 30 April 2024 ([A/78/865](#)). This report provides an overview of the progress for the period 2022-2023 towards achieving the global nutrition and related SDG targets and substantial advances in a wide variety of nutrition-related activities within the six action areas of the Nutrition Decade's Work Programme and other nutrition-related global processes. Both the Nutrition Decade and the global nutrition targets have shown their use in providing a vision, a multisectoral framework and ambition in support of the SDGs, especially to reach SDG2. Towards the end of the Nutrition Decade, informal dialogues will be convened in 2025 with the aim to reflect on global progress achieved and challenges encountered, building upon and connecting initiatives of Governments and their many partners, and to review an extension of the Nutrition Decade to 2030. By aligning with the overarching goals of the SDGs and leveraging multisectoral approaches, such an extension or other can catalyse coordinated action across governments, civil society, and the private sector, leading to improved nutrition outcomes, enhanced resilience, and a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

The Healthy Diets Monitoring Initiative

The Healthy Diets Monitoring Initiative (HDMI), a joint initiative of FAO/UNICEF/WHO was formed in 2022 to bring together experts and initiate a process to reach consensus on the core principles of a healthy diet, to assess the construct validity and cross-context equivalence of available healthy diet metrics, and to develop guidance for monitoring progress towards healthy diets at national and global levels. A suitability assessment

⁷ (1) <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/1f862332-2726-47c6-b3fb-cc3f8d5a08f2>, (2) <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/a525072c-0078-4152-b5b2-73616075a4db>, (3) <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/44174a49-914a-4432-9b9d-b8c2a3b571c0>, (4) <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/2bf9814e-54d1-4e43-9b5c-ddbf770c7513>

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPBkbpjQM> from 3h53min30sec.

⁹ [fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FMeetings%252FCX-712-54%252FFINAL%252520REPORT%252FREPREP24_FHe.pdf](https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/a525072c-0078-4152-b5b2-73616075a4db)

report, call-to-action, technical expert meeting report, and guidance version 1 were published in 2023-2024, in addition to ongoing reviews and statistical analyses which aim to accelerate progress in the development, validation, and uptake of evidence-informed healthy diet metrics: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/the-healthy-diets-monitoring-initiative-hdmi/>

Healthy diets are fundamental to SDG 2 and are a prerequisite for achieving many other SDGs, yet diets are not captured specifically by any indicator in the current SDG framework. During the 2025 Comprehensive Review of SDG indicator framework, the “Prevalence of minimum dietary diversity (MDD), by population group (children aged 6-23.9 months and women aged 15 to 49 years)” was submitted as an additional SDG 2 indicator by Switzerland (lead), Bangladesh, Brazil, and Malawi, with support from FAO/IFAD/UNICEF/WFP/WHO. The proposal of MDD is one of 15 included in the global open consultation: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/2025-comprehensive-review>. The Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) will prepare the final proposal for the 2025 Comprehensive Review and submit it to the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) for its consideration at the fifty-sixth session in March 2025.

Joint Statement on the Principles of a Healthy Diet

In September 2024, FAO and WHO will publish a Joint Statement on the Principles of a Healthy diet. The statement will lay out four core principles of what makes diets *healthy* for humans. These principles are driven by human biology, underpinned by evidence, and universal in their application. Specifically, to be healthy, diets must be **adequate** in all essential nutrients to prevent deficiencies and promote health, without excess; **diverse**, including a wide variety of nutritious foods within and across food groups, favoring nutrient adequacy and consumption of other bioactive health promoting substances. They must also be **balanced** in energy intake aligns with requirements to favor healthy weight, growth among children and adolescents, and pregnancy outcomes, and with the main sources of energy (i.e., fats, carbohydrates, proteins) in proportions that help prevent disease (refs). Finally, healthy diets are **moderate** in (or avoid) non-essential nutrients (e.g. free sugar) and foods that are associated with negative health outcomes (e.g. ultraprocessed foods). The joint statement also stresses the importance of food safety to prevent illness and promote the body’s optimal utilization of nutrients.

The Joint Statement also emphasizes that many dietary patterns – or the combinations of foods that people consume over time and in context – can be healthy, when meeting these four principles. Dietary patterns are highly contextual, depending on local food access, preferences, culture and traditions. To guide consumer education and inform policies to promote healthy dietary guidelines, countries must develop local guidelines.

The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024: Financing to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms

FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO partnered to produce the joint report on The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024 ([SOFI 2024](#)) provides latest trends and analysis on the global food security and nutrition situation, including updated estimates on the cost and affordability of healthy diets. Furthermore, it provides a definition of financing for food security and nutrition, which refers to the process of providing or obtaining financial resources to ensure that all people, at all times, have stable, physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods that meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, and suitable food preparation and handling, feeding, caring, and health-seeking practices, and access to health, water and sanitation services to ensure a continued adequate nutritional status. Additionally, it covers expenditures and investments that aim to ensure that all individuals are protected against short-term or long-term instability in food security and nutrition, caused by various climatic, economic, social, commercial and political factors. The report also presents recommendations regarding the efficient use of innovative financing tools and reforms to the food security and nutrition financing architecture.

FAO ACTIVITIES

FAO activities on Food Labelling

At the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), governments affirmed that the “empowerment of consumers is necessary through improved and evidence-based health and nutrition information and education to make informed choices regarding consumption of food products for healthy dietary practices” (FAO/WHO 2014). Food labelling was included among the recommendations in the ICN2 Framework for Action (FAO/WHO, 2014). To this end, FAO has developed the following resources on food labelling for developing the capacity in countries to implement food labelling policies and programmes:

The FAO website on Food Labelling (<http://www.fao.org/food-labelling/en/>) which provides information on Food Labelling standards and guidelines and FAO activities on food labelling. Studies to support policies for micro, small and medium food processing companies in the implementation of front of pack nutrition labelling. Country level policy analyses was conducted in Chile and Brazil and resulting reports are expected to be published in 2024.

FAO with the support of the Japanese cooperation implemented capacity development at different levels in Ghana, Kenya and Vietnam aiming to scale up capacities of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) for nutrition-sensitive food systems including implementation of food labelling. Activities include the introduction of mentoring and coaching programmes for local SMEs, the introduction of nutrition in the curriculum of several universities in the three countries, the delivery of two e-learning programmes on SMEs and nutrition ([Course: Small and Medium Enterprises and Nutrition – making the business case | FAO elearning Academy](#)) and the organization of national workshops to boost the skills and competencies that SMEs need to better perform in local markets.

A handbook on food labelling that provides an introduction to labelling as part of an ongoing effort to assist regulators and others working in the area of food systems who are responsible for formulating and implementing food labelling policies. Specific types of labels are explained such as ingredient lists (including allergen and food additive information), date marking, nutrition labels (back of pack panels and front of pack systems) as well as nutrient and health claims. Relevant sections of the book follow the guidance given by the Codex Alimentarius Commission on food labelling in particular the Codex *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985). The handbook is available in English and has also been translated in French at <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/fc5f4bc2-650a-4704-9162-9eb9b3a1fdd0/> and <https://doi.org/10.4060/i6575fr>.

FAO's Role on supporting countries in their development of labels contributing to sustainable food system

FAO is supporting the development of quality linked to geographical origin products that will contribute to rural development. Geographical Indications (GIs) refer to products with specific characteristics, qualities or reputation resulting essentially from their geographical origin. GIs are legal tools for protection of intellectual property rights according to the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) of the World Trade Organization and the Geneva Act of the Lisbon agreement of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). GIs are also tools for sustainable food system development as they could facilitate direct management by the local community of producers and the preservation of local natural resources. Origin-based labels preserve and add value to traditional quality food products, for the benefit of producers, especially family farmers and smallholders, but also for consumers, promoting better access to nutritious local food. FAO has set up a thematic website to provide information on its vision and activities in this area (www.fao.org/geographical-indications).

FAO/INFOODS Food Composition Databases

FAO coordinates the International Network of Food Data Systems (INFOODS), a worldwide network of food composition experts aiming to improve the quality, availability, reliability and use of food composition data. These data are necessary, for example, for the assessment of dietary intakes, diet quality, and for the development and application of food based dietary guidelines and nutrition labelling or selected Codex standards.

An update and expansion to the FAO/INFOODS Global Food Composition Database for Fish and Shellfish (uFiSh), developed in 2016 (<https://www.fao.org/infoods/infoods/tables-and-databases/faoinfoods-databases>), is underway by FAO and aims to expand information on the nutrient composition of different fish species and aquatic plants. FAO is currently providing advice for the release of new food composition tables in Ethiopia, Bangladesh and for the Asian Food Composition Database in collaboration with the respective national authorities and academic institutes.

In 2024, FAO published a Global Nutrient Conversion Table (NCT) for application to the FAO Supply Utilization Accounts (SUA) (<https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cc9678en>). SUA statistics at country level cover almost all countries and territories of the world and have been published by FAO since 1961. The Global NCT was prepared based on good quality national or regional food composition databases representing different regions in the world. The new Global NCT provides data required to generate statistics for energy, macronutrients, vitamins (vitamins A, thiamin, riboflavin and vitamin C), minerals (calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and zinc) for all SUA items and, additionally, copper, selenium, vitamins B6 and B12 and fatty acids (total saturated, mono- and poly-unsaturated fatty acids, EPA and DHA) for fish and other aquatic products. SUAs statistics based on the Global NCT are available under the Food and Diet domain on FAOSTAT (<https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/SUA>)

Finally, FAO has published in 2023 the FAO/INFOODS Evaluation Framework to Assess the Quality of Published Food Composition Tables and Databases (FCT/FCDBs) – (Evaluation Framework) to assist both users and compilers to perform a global evaluation of FCT/FCDBs using a systematic approach (<https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cc5371en>).

Alternative animal source foods (A-ASFs): "A comprehensive review of the evidence on their benefits and risks for nutrition, environment, livelihoods, and food safety"

FAO will produce a comprehensive review with related recommendations for the current state of evidence on this topic. To do so FAO has commissioned a series of background reviews of the evidence on the benefits and risks of A-ASFs for nutrition, environment, socio-economic considerations, and food safety. FAOs work will include defining A-ASFs and their sub-categories and developing a glossary of relevant terminology and synonyms. In addition to the FAO document, the background papers will be published as scoping/ narrative reviews on the topics mentioned.

Joint IAEA–FAO-IAEA Protein Quality Database Technical Advisory Group and relevant meetings

Defining accurately the amount and quality required to meet human nutritional needs and describing appropriately the protein supplied by foods and diets is critical in meeting global nutrition targets. Scientific advice on protein quality evaluation is also relevant for the development of Codex Alimentarius food standards and guidelines. More specifically, the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU) has considered the issue of protein quality in foods and diets on several occasions. Standardized protein quality of foods data in humans has a potential to inform dialogue on recommendations for protein requirements for all age groups, especially in first 3 years of life. Following the Joint FAO-IAEA technical meeting held in October 2022 on "The Way Forward for the Assessment of Protein Requirements and Protein Quality and for the Development of a Protein Digestibility and Quality Database", the Joint FAO-IAEA Advisory Group was established in March 2024 to provide advice on the construction of the Joint FAO/IAEA database on ileal digestibility of protein and individual amino acids in foods consumed by humans. A meeting will be held in Paris in November 2024 to discuss the progress of the construction of the protein quality database and evaluate actions needed for its finalization.

Vision and Strategy for FAO's work in Nutrition

Better nutrition is one of the four fundamental aspirations of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 guiding FAO's support to its Members in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To help prioritize action, FAO has articulated a vision for nutrition of a world where all people are eating healthy diets from sustainable, inclusive and resilient agrifood systems, which was included in a dedicated cross-organizational strategy that was requested by the FAO Governing Bodies with accountability to Members. The Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition was adopted at the 166th Session of the FAO Council in 2021. In 2023, FAO completed the first biennium of implementing this corporate document that aims to guide and support the Organization in its mission to raise levels of nutrition. As this Strategy will come to an end in 2025, FAO will update it in 2024-25, ensuring alignment and complementarity to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, and aiming to enhance efforts to elevate healthy diets as part of the agenda of nutrition for governments and other stakeholders and achieve dual outcomes for agrifood systems' resilience, profitability and enabling access to healthy diets.

Global Food Consumption Databases

The FAO/WHO Global Individual Food consumption data Tool (FAO/WHO GIFT) is an open-access online platform, hosted by FAO and supported by WHO, that enables the dissemination of individual-level quantitative food consumption data, especially from low- and middle-income countries. This comprehensive database is a multipurpose tool that allows users to download available data for free in a format following a standardised data structure and codebook. In addition, the platform provides data visualisations related to food consumption, nutrient intakes, dietary diversity, food safety, and the environmental impacts of diet. The platform uses a food classification and description system called FoodEx2 which allows for harmonisation of food names and food codes across diverse datasets. FoodEx2 has been developed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and was enhanced for use at a global level by FAO. FAO/WHO GIFT is continually being populated with additional data. To date, the platform contains data from 59 surveys (20 national and 39 sub-national) from 36 countries. The platform also contains a global inventory map with detailed information on 351 surveys (181 are national and 170 are sub-national). The FAO/WHO GIFT platform is available at <http://www.fao.org/gift-individual-food-consumption/en/>.

In 2024, FAO launched a new domain on FAOSTAT, the corporate statistical database for food and agriculture. The new domain, known as "food and diet", was developed to share statistics on different types of dietary related data in an effort to help close data gaps and contribute to better guidance for nutrition-sensitive agrifood systems policies. Statistics for four types of data are presented in four subdomains: availability, based on supply utilization accounts; apparent intake, based on Household Consumption and Expenditure Surveys; intake, based on nationally representative individual quantitative dietary intake surveys; and diversity, based on the minimum dietary diversity for women (MDD-W) indicator. A total of 24 nutrients are presented for the first three subdomains and statistics by food groups available for all four subdomains are based on a nutrition-sensitive food grouping classification. The Food and Diet Domain on FAOSTAT is available at <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data>.

Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W)

MDD-W is a dichotomous population-level indicator capturing the proportion of non-pregnant women aged 15-49 years who have consumed foods from at least five out of ten defined food groups in the previous 24-hours. MDD-W was validated against a measure of minimally acceptable level of dietary micronutrient adequacy. MDD-W reflects dietary diversity and micronutrient adequacy, two core properties of healthy diets.

In 2023, FAO published an e-learning on MDD-W: <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=909>, building on FAO's updated MDD-W guide published in 2021: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb3434en>. In addition, various supporting technical documents were published in 2023-2024, such as a Frequently Asked Question document (FAQ) and a policy brief (<https://www.fao.org/nutrition/assessment/tools/minimum-dietary-diversity-women/en/>), and the validity of MDD-W was expanded to include boys and non-pregnant girls aged 10-19 years ([https://cdn.nutrition.org/article/S2475-2991\(24\)00023-4/fulltext](https://cdn.nutrition.org/article/S2475-2991(24)00023-4/fulltext)).

Food Systems-Based Dietary Guidelines (FSBDGs)

FAO in collaboration with world-renowned experts have elaborated a new methodology for the development and implementation of second-generation dietary guidelines that are food systems based. The new methodology will allow countries not only to address health and nutritional challenges and priorities but also to anchor them on a targeted food systems analysis for increasing their usability, relevance and contribution to the transformation of food systems towards socio-cultural, economic and environmental sustainability leaching the potential of dietary guidelines to inform and guide policies and actions throughout the food system. The guidelines resulting from this new methodology are context-specific multilevel recommendations that enable governments to outline what constitutes a healthy diet from sustainable food systems, align food-related policies and programmes and support the population to adopt healthier and more sustainable dietary patterns and practices. Their effectiveness resides in that they are developed through an evidence-informed, multidisciplinary and multisectoral engagement process and with a food system approach. They result in a package of outputs and resources that can be adopted and used for food system transformation towards better diet-related practices and, subsequently, better health, better nutrition, and other sustainability outcomes. An overview of the new methodology is available ([Food systems-based dietary guidelines: An overview](#)). The methodology will be released in a modular format, starting from later this year (2024).

FAO continues providing technical support to countries for the development and implementation of dietary guidelines. In the last four years, FAO provided technical support to 14 countries in the Africa region, 9 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2 countries in Europe and Central Asia and 1 country in Asia and the Pacific. The FAO website on Food-Based Dietary Guidelines which was launched in November 2014, continues to be updated and serves as the only global repository and platform for information exchange on dietary guidelines from across the world. At present the repository contains information from 100 countries. To access the FAO website on FBDGs: <http://www.fao.org/nutrition/nutrition-education/food-dietary-guidelines/en/>.

School-based Food and Nutrition

FAO recognizes schoolchildren as a priority population for nutrition interventions and views schools as ideal settings to support the nutrition and development of children and adolescents. Based on FAO's School Food and Nutrition Framework¹⁰ and the white paper on school-based food and nutrition education¹¹, FAO has been collaborating since 2021 with UNICEF for strengthening school-based food and nutrition education (SFNE) in low and middle-income countries, with the ultimate goal of fostering food competences in schoolchildren and adolescents for better food choices and for adopting healthier and more sustainable diets. In 2022 the two organizations designed a joint global initiative for developing the capacities of education officials and curriculum developers to integrate action-oriented food and nutrition education curricula into their school systems. The initiative has been piloted in Colombia and is currently being revised based on the feedback received. FAO and UNICEF are currently providing technical support in SFNE to a variety of countries including Ghana and China.

In June 2022, FAO launched the [School Food Global Hub](#)¹², developed by FAO in collaboration with WFP and supported by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL). One of the main objectives of the Hub is to stimulate global dialogue on the importance of school food to support healthy eating habits among children and adolescents. It also showcases the complementary measures that contribute to this, such as the school food environment, policy and legal frameworks, the integration of school food and nutrition education within the curriculum, home-grown school feeding initiatives, etc. In this respect, the Hub strives to bring

¹⁰ School Food and Nutrition Framework, 2019, <https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CA4091EN/>

¹¹ FAO. 2020. School-based food and nutrition education – A white paper on the current state, principles, challenges and recommendations for low- and middle-income countries. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb2064en>

¹² <https://www.fao.org/platforms/school-food/en>

together all possible content in these areas; from scientific articles and publications to news and events to many other useful resources.

Finally, FAO is an active member of the Global School Meals Coalition, providing technical expertise in various of its initiatives (such as the Monitoring and Data initiative and the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition), participating in working groups and providing technical support to member countries through the BMEL supported project. Main areas of support include the development of nutrition guidelines for school meal programmes, monitoring and evaluation, policy and legal frameworks and public food procurement.

WHO ACTIVITIES

Alcohol

Public health warning labels offer countries an opportunity to inform the public about the potential impact of alcohol consumption on health and safety. According to the [2024 WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health and Treatment of Substance Use Disorders](#), 55 countries reported requiring at least one warning label on pregnancy, underage drinking, drink-driving and/or cancer included on alcoholic beverage containers in 2019. Two to four times warning labels required are about underage drinking (34.5%), drink-driving (30.3%) or pregnancy (22.3%) compared to cancer warnings (8.6%). This is equivalent to saying that only 5.8% of the people living in the 55 countries requiring warning labels can see a mandatory warning about cancer risks associated with alcohol consumption. The WHO Global Status Report recalls the growing consensus about the need to warn people about alcohol's link with cancer as well as the likelihood of people with this knowledge supporting other effective alcohol policies.

From August 2023 to July 2024, WHO provided direct technical advice to countries and delivered several training and capacity-building activities on alcoholic beverage labelling in 30 countries in the WHO African, European, South-East Asian, and Western Pacific regions. The topics included the regulation of health warnings, alignment of national regulations to international and regional standards, development of public health evidence-based arguments to counteract vested interests, role and functioning of the CCFL/CODEX, WTO, WHO and other stakeholders and updates on the evidence, among others. This highlights the interest of countries to apply the lessons from global evidence about the health consequences of alcohol consumption into concrete policy measures.

In 2024, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) published the Handbooks of Cancer Prevention Volume 20A: Reduction or Cessation of Alcoholic Beverage Consumption, which concludes that there is sufficient evidence that alcohol cessation reduces alcohol-related carcinogenesis. In particular, there is evidence that [the risk of cancers of the oral cavity and oesophagus can be reduced by decreasing or ceasing the consumption of alcoholic beverages](#). IARC Subsequent handbooks will review population-level interventions to reduce alcohol consumption.

Recent studies on alcohol labelling report that (i) [health warnings are an effective policy option to increase knowledge about the fact that alcohol consumption increases the risk of some cancers](#); (ii) [interventions with multiple types of rotating alcohol container labels likely substantially decrease alcohol use \(moderate certainty\) and reduce alcohol sales \(high certainty\)](#); (iii) [health warnings are associated with lower product appeal, higher risk perceptions and reduced intentions to try, buy and binge with outcomes similar by gender and age](#); (iv) [the efficiency of potential buyers' perception results from many elements, including the sign's placement, size and colours, a connection between graphic and textual information and the colour of the packaging material and label](#); (v) [label information provided only digitally in a QR code may not reach everyone equally \(usage rate 2.6 per 1000 among those who purchased alcohol\)](#); and, (vi) [nutrition-related claims have the potential to mislead consumers about the healthiness of alcohol products](#).

Work to develop and implement nutrient profile models (NPMs)

As part of its normative mandate, WHO has been working on establishing nutrient profile models (NPMs) for over a decade¹³. WHO initially focused on providing overall evidence-based guiding principles for the development and implementation of NPMs, which led to the development of region-specific models in all six

¹³ WHO. Nutrient profiling: Report of a WHO/IASO technical meeting. (2010): https://apps.who.int/nutrition/publications/profiling/WHO_IASO_report2010/en/index.html

WHO regions to support governments in implementing policies to protect children from the harmful impact of marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages.^{14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19}

Such guidance has evolved. For example, the NPM for the WHO European Region published in 2015 has just been updated.²⁰ The guidance has also expanded to cover other policies targeting the food environment. For example, the NPM developed for the region of the Americas in 2016 was designed for multiple applications, including front-of-package labelling, regulation for school environments, fiscal policies on foods and non-alcoholic beverages, among other policies. Models developed in WHO South-East Asia (SEARO) and Africa (AFRO) included definitions for food and non-alcoholic beverages excessive in total fats, saturated fats, free sugars and sodium that have the potential to be used in other policies requiring such definition.

The adoption of WHO regional NPMs by countries have strengthened their policies to promote and protect healthy diets and public health, and have reduced the time they take to deliver such benefits to their populations.²¹ Following Member States' requests, WHO continued to work on NPMs, including for applications other than marketing restrictions.^{22, 23} This will also complement forthcoming WHO guidelines on nutrition labelling policies,²⁴ fiscal policies to promote healthy diets,²⁵ and policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing,²⁶ and is of particular importance for those regions that initially focused their NPMs on policies to restrict the marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages.

Work is underway to develop guidance for establishing NPMs for front-of-package labelling in regions where WHO regional NPMs initially focused only on marketing regulations. WHO will continue to provide guidance and technical support to its Member States on advancing implementation of food environment policies to promote healthy diets, including guidance on NPMs that underlie such policies. WHO is currently finalizing an information brief on classifying foods for policies to improve food environment.

WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG) Subgroup on Policy Actions

Following the WHO guideline development process, the NUGAG Subgroup on Policy Actions is working on developing guidelines on priority food environment policies. The guideline on policies to protect children from the harmful impact of **food marketing**²⁷ and the guideline on **fiscal policies** to promote healthy diets²⁸ were launched in July 2023 and June 2024, respectively. The guideline on **nutrition labelling policies** has undergone peer review and public consultation, which ended in October 2024²⁹ and is now being prepared for launch early 2025. The NUGAG Subgroup on Policy Actions has met virtually in September 2024 to review the outcomes of a rapid updated search of evidence for the **school food and nutrition policy guideline** and has finalized the recommendations.³⁰

¹⁴ WHO/EURO Nutrient profiling model (2015): https://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/270716/Nutrient-children_web-new.pdf

¹⁵ WHO/WPRO Nutrient profiling model (2016): <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789290617853>

¹⁶ WHO/PAHO Nutrient profiling model (2016):

https://iris.paho.org/bitstream/handle/10665.2/18621/9789275118733_eng.pdf

¹⁷ WHO/SEARO Nutrient profiling model (2017): <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/253459>

¹⁸ WHO/EMRO Nutrient profiling model (2017): https://applications.emro.who.int/dsaf/EMROPUB_2017_en_19632.pdf

¹⁹ WHO/AFRO Nutrient profiling model (2019): <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/329956>

²⁰ WHO/EURO Nutrient profiling model. 2nd edition (2023): <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2023-6894-46660-68492>

²¹ Crosbie E, et al. A policy study on front-of-pack nutrition labeling in the Americas: emerging developments and outcomes. *Lancet Reg Health Am.* 2022;18:100400. doi: 10.1016/j.lana.2022.100400.

²² Use of nutrient profile models for nutrition and health policies: meeting report on the use of nutrient profile models in the WHO European Region, September 2021. (2022): <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2022-6201-45966-66383>

²³ The Global RECAP: Global Regulatory and Fiscal Capacity Building Programme (2023):

<https://www.who.int/initiatives/global-regulatory-and-fiscal-policy-capacity-buidling-programme>

²⁴ Sixth meeting of the WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG) Subgroup on Policy Actions (2022): [https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2022/12/14/default-calendar/sixth-meeting-of-the-who-nutrition-guidance-expert-advisory-group-\(nugag\)-subgroup-on-policy-actions](https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2022/12/14/default-calendar/sixth-meeting-of-the-who-nutrition-guidance-expert-advisory-group-(nugag)-subgroup-on-policy-actions)

²⁵ Public consultation on the draft WHO guideline on fiscal policies to promote healthy diets (2022):

<https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/public-consultation-on-the-draft-guideline-fiscal-policies-to-promote-healthy-diets>

²⁶ Public consultation on the draft WHO guideline on policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing (2022): <https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/Online-public-consultation-on-draft-guideline-on-policies-to-protect-children-from-the-harmful-impact-of-food-marketing>

²⁷ [Policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing: WHO guideline](https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/policies-to-protect-children-from-the-harmful-impact-of-food-marketing-who-guideline)

²⁸ [Fiscal policies to promote healthy diets: WHO guideline](https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/fiscal-policies-to-promote-healthy-diets-who-guideline)

²⁹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/online-public-consultation-draft-guideline-on-nutrition-labelling-policies>

³⁰ [https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2024/09/02/default-calendar/eighth-meeting-of-the-who-nutrition-guidance-expert-advisory-group-\(nugag\)-subgroup-on-policy-actions](https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2024/09/02/default-calendar/eighth-meeting-of-the-who-nutrition-guidance-expert-advisory-group-(nugag)-subgroup-on-policy-actions)

WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG) Subgroup on Diet and Health

The following WHO guidelines related to healthy diets were released in 2023: i) **Saturated fatty acid and trans-fatty acid** intake for adults and children; ii) **Total fat** intake for the prevention of unhealthy weight gain in adults and children; iii) **Carbohydrate** intake for adults and children; iv) Use of **non-sugar sweeteners**.

The WHO guideline on **polyunsaturated fatty acid** intake for adults and children and the WHO guideline on use of **low-sodium salt substitutes** are currently being finalized and are planned for release in early 2025 and end of 2024, respectively.

WHO guidelines on the optimal intake of animal source foods

WHO has initiated work on developing guidelines on the optimal intake of animal source foods which will include guidance on commonly consumed animal source foods (including red meat, dairy and fish) and plant alternatives (legumes, whole grains, nuts/seeds and soy). In addition to health effects of consuming these foods, elements of sustainability, environmental impact, and microbial and chemical risk will be considered when developing the guidance.

WHO guidance on the consumption of “Ultra-processed” foods

WHO is developing guidance on the consumption of highly processed (AKA “ultra-processed”) foods, in a two-step process. The first step will be the development of a more objective, operational definition of ultra-processed foods than is currently used, and thus more amenable to use in applications such as nutrient profile models. The second step will be the development of a WHO guideline on consumption of ultra-processed foods (informed by the operational definition).

WHO Activities to promote healthy diets and reduce NCD risk factors

Member States committed to reducing exposure to unhealthy diets through the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) (2011). The Fourth High-level Meeting, to be held in 2025, will provide an opportunity to adopt a new, ambitious and achievable political declaration on NCDs towards 2050. In the lead up, efforts are scaled up to achieve the set of nine voluntary targets established by the WHA in 2013, including the target to reduce sodium intake, and to halt the increase in adult and child obesity. This will enable countries to achieve SDG target 3.4 (by 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from NCDs).

Decision WHA75(11) (2022) adopted recommendations for the prevention and management of obesity over the life course and related targets, which were accompanied by an acceleration plan that clarifies how WHO will support Member States in implementing these recommendations. Resolution WHA76(9) (2023) endorsed the updated menu of policy options and cost-effective interventions for the prevention and control of NCDs³¹, which includes a number of interventions to promote healthy diets, such as reformulation of processed/manufactured food, public food procurement and service, encouraging consumers to make healthier choices (media campaigns, front-of-pack or other interpretative nutrition labelling, menu labelling), food marketing restrictions, the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding, and taxation of sugar-sweetened beverages. WHO’s Global database on the Implementation of Food and Nutrition Action (GIFNA)³² is an interactive platform for sharing standardized information on numerous food and nutrition policies and interventions, which enables monitoring of global progress in implementing legislative and other measures and increased accountability towards political commitments.

Population sodium/salt intake reduction

WHO continues to support Member States to reduce population sodium intake, and achievement of the nine global voluntary targets, including a 30% relative reduction in mean population sodium intake by 2030, with a goal of achieving an intake of < 2 000 mg/day sodium; and a 25% relative reduction in the prevalence of raised blood pressure by 2030, so as to contain the prevalence of raised blood pressure. The updated menu of policy options and cost-effective interventions remain of critical importance to sodium reduction. WHO has published several tools and technical documents to support Member States, industry and communities in reducing population sodium intake including: The SHAKE Technical Package for Salt Reduction, which is currently being updated and will be re-released in 2024, the Action Framework for developing and implementing public food procurement and service policies to promote healthy diets (2021), the Global Sodium Benchmarks for different food categories (second edition released in 2024)³³ and the Sodium Country Score Card, hosted within the

³¹ Update of Appendix 3 of the WHO Global Action Plan on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (2013–2030): <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240091078>

³² <https://gifna.who.int/summary/sodium.int>

³³ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240092013>

GIFNA database, which tracks country progress towards introducing policies for sodium reduction. The first Global Report on Sodium Reduction was launched in March 2023. WHO is also working on a “step-by-step” guidance on national adaptation of the WHO sodium targets, either the WHO global sodium benchmarks or regional sodium targets³⁴ where available.

Elimination of industrially produced trans-fatty acids

In May 2018, WHO called for the global elimination of industrially produced of *trans*-fatty acids (TFA) by 2023. To achieve successful TFA elimination, WHO recommends governments to adopt either of the two best-practice policies: 1) Mandatory limit of 2 grams of TFA per 100 grams of total fats and oils in all foods; and 2) Mandatory ban on the production or use of partially hydrogenated oils (PHO) as an ingredient in all foods. WHO has released the REPLACE action package and other tools and provided capacity-building assistance to support country efforts.³⁵ In June 2024, WHO released its fifth annual progress report “Countdown to 2023: WHO 5-year milestone report on global trans fat elimination 2023”³⁶. The report shows that at the end of 2023, 53 countries have implemented best-practice policies for tackling TFA in food, with 3.7 billion people protected globally³⁷. While the ambitious target to fully eliminate TFA from the global food supply by the end of 2023 has not been fully met, there has been remarkable progress made towards this goal in every region of the world. In 2023 alone, new best-practice policies became effective in seven countries: Egypt, Mexico, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Philippines, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. In January 2024, WHO awarded its certificates validating progress in eliminating industrially produced TFA to five countries: Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Saudi Arabia and Thailand³⁸. WHO recommends that all countries enact best practice policies and strengthen their mechanisms to monitor and enforce the policies. WHO also encourages suppliers of oils and fats and food manufacturers to remove industrially produced TFA from their products. To provide countries with further guidance on healthier alternatives, WHO is currently developing a guideline on tropical oils consumption.

WHO guidelines on complementary feeding of infants and children 6-23 months of age

In October 2023, WHO published guidelines on complementary feeding of infants and young children. The guidelines reiterated the long-standing recommendation for continued breastfeeding for 2 years or beyond. It stated that for infants and young children 6-23 months of age who are not breastfed or who need supplemental milk, either milk formula or animal milk is an acceptable alternative. Complementary foods should be introduced at 6 months of age. A diverse diet, including animal-source foods, fruits, vegetables, nuts, pulses and seeds is important. Starchy staple foods should be minimized. When cereal grains are used, whole cereal grains should be prioritized. Foods high in sugar, salt and trans fats, sugar-sweetened beverages, and non-sugar sweeteners should not be consumed. Where nutrient requirements cannot be met with unfortified foods alone, children 6–23 months of age may benefit from nutrient supplements or fortified food products.

WHO technical support on the Code of marketing of breast-milk substitutes

WHO and UNICEF co-hosted a Global Congress on Implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes in Geneva in June 2023. Delegates from some 130 countries engaged in knowledge transfer and technical assistance with experts on the Code. The Congress covered six key themes that are essential for effective Code implementation: 1) building political will; 2) identifying and managing industry interference; 3) implementing the Code into national law; 4) strengthening coordination and governance mechanisms in national laws; 5) monitoring and enforcing Code laws; and 6) taking action. Countries shared their successes and challenges with Code implementation, particularly highlighting stories of industry interference in the legislative and monitoring processes. Each country developed road maps or workplans to continue work on strengthening national legislation, monitoring and enforcement of the Code. In several regions networks have been built to continue sharing information and assistance across countries.

WHO and UNICEF hosted regional workshops on Code implementation in Sri Lanka (November 2022), Nepal (May 2023), Côte d'Ivoire (March 2024) and Uzbekistan (May 2024). WHO updated the online training course about the Code to use the most recent learning technologies and make it more accessible. The course is directed towards health workers, policymakers, public health practitioners and others with responsibilities for putting the Code into effect.

At the request of the World Health Assembly, WHO developed guidance on regulatory measures aimed at restricting digital marketing of breast-milk substitutes, containing 11 recommendations for Member State

³⁴ WHO South-East Asia Region Sodium Benchmarks for Packaged Foods ([9789290210818-eng.pdf \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789290210818-eng.pdf)); [Updated PAHO Regional Sodium Reduction Targets \(PAHONMHRF210016 eng.pdf\)](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/PAHONMHRF210016-eng.pdf)

³⁵ <https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety/replace-trans-fat>

³⁶ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240089549>

³⁷ <https://gifna.who.int/summary/TFA>

³⁸ [WHO awards countries for progress in eliminating industrially produced trans fats for first time](https://www.who.int/news/item/2024-01-15-who-awards-countries-for-progress-in-eliminating-industrially-produced-trans-fats-for-first-time)

action³⁹. The recommendations highlight new marketing tactics that were not possible without digital technologies and describe legislative solutions to addressing them.

The 2024 Code Status Report⁴⁰ analyzed the provisions of the Code covered in national legislation for all 194 WHO Member States. The report found that 146 countries (comprising 91% of all global annual births) now have laws on at least some provisions in the Code, although only 33 countries' laws are substantially aligned with the Code. Monitoring and enforcement is needed for laws to effectively improve breastfeeding — the exclusive breastfeeding rate is 53% in countries where monitoring and enforcement procedures are spelled out in the Code legislation compared to only 27% in countries that do not include these procedures. The report included case-studies from Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Sierra Leone highlighting the impacts of industry interference in Code legislation as well as ways to defend against it.

³⁹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240084490>

⁴⁰ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240094482>