

The effects of policy actions to improve population dietary patterns and prevent diet related non-communicable diseases: scoping review

Globally, poor diets are responsible for a greater number of non-communicable diseases than any other risk factors. Indeed, the increased consumption of ultra-processed foods leads to excessive consumption of foods high in fat, sugar and salt and low consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts. Actions therefore need to be taken to improve diets to be able to prevent the growing burden associated with non-communicable diseases. The aim of this scoping review was “to collate the current evidence on policy interventions to promote healthier dietary consumption.”

After screening and assessing for eligibility, 58 systematic reviews were included in this scoping review. Overall, the results suggest that ‘upstream’ interventions such as price, multi-component and reformulation interventions are consistently effective in improving healthy eating. However, food labelling and restrictions on provision or marketing of unhealthy foods were generally less effective and offered less long-term benefits. Specifically, “while menu labelling appears weak or ineffective, food labelling may help consumers to choose and purchase healthier options, while also exerting pressure on manufacturers to reformulate.” Despite a restricted pool of studies, the current evidence highlights overall difficulties in interpreting the labels. This confirms that the impact of the label depends on “individual awareness, knowledge and ability to interpret the labels correctly” and therefore calls for the combined implementation of different policies.

Reference: L Hyseni et al. The effects of policy actions to improve population dietary patterns and prevent diet-related non-communicable diseases: scoping review. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2016;71(6):694-711. Doi: [10.1038/ejcn.2016.234](https://doi.org/10.1038/ejcn.2016.234).