The impact of initiatives to limit the advertising of food and beverage products to children: a systematic review

Marketing of unhealthy food is globally recognised as a risk factor for childhood obesity. The World Health Assembly called for a set of recommendations for Member States on marketing of foods and beverages to children and by 2010, 22 countries had developed policies on marketing to children. This systematic review seeks to summarise evidence on the impact of regulation and industry self-regulation on curbing children’s exposure to the advertising and commercial promotion of less healthy foods and beverages.

The results from the 21 included studies are mixed and highlight that despite the pledges taken by many countries, high levels of unhealthy food advertisement are still found in many countries globally. However, industry-sponsored reports highlight strong adherence to voluntary codes, which unfortunately appears to remain insufficient in reducing the advertising of unhealthy foods and products.