Food systems and obesity: Considerations for European Policymakers

The present briefing has been written to support policymakers, civil society organisations (CSOs), and other stakeholders with the implementation of food system-related policies and guidelines across Europe. It supplements the evidence on available policies and recommendations provided by systematic reviews, cost studies, case studies, and other resources and guidelines compiled in the World Obesity Federation’s policy dossier, available here, a policy laboratory held by World Obesity on July 13th, 2021, and other guidelines and reports published on the topic. This briefing presents a summary of the evidence, highlighting necessary steps and considerations to ensure the appropriate implementation of policies that are crucial to transform food systems for human and planetary health. More information can be found at: https://www.worldobesity.org/resources/policy-dossiers/food-systems

INTRODUCTION

The global burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is at an all-time high and are now the leading cause of death worldwide.\(^1\) It is estimated that 41 million deaths are attributed to NCDs every year, equivalent to 71% of all worldwide deaths.\(^2\) Among them, obesity has been rising with prevalence rates nearly tripling between 1975 and 2016 and showing no signs of slowing down.\(^3\) The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that globally (as of 2016), 2.1 billion people (almost 39%) are living with overweight or obesity, of which 650 million are affected by obesity (over 13%)\(^3\) While obesity has historically been associated with high-income countries, it is now rising fastest in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).\(^4\) Around the world, obesity is prevalent across all socioeconomic groups, in both urban and rural areas, though the extent of which varies between regions and cultures.\(^5\)

Unhealthy diets – a key social determinant of health – are responsible for more premature deaths and more total deaths than any other risk factor globally. In recent decades, a nutrition transition has occurred; while undernutrition used to be the leading cause of death among diet-related diseases, overweight and obesity have now surpassed this.\(^6\) One of the major factors driving this transition is our ever-changing food systems, which have been significantly altered in recent decades by globalisation and industrialisation.\(^7\) This means many people are now living in environments where proliferation of cheap and available high energy density food dominates, while opportunities to be physical active are reduced. The way in which food is produced, marketed, and consumed has changed drastically in the past 50 years\(^8\) and has contributed significantly to the increase in obesity rates globally, further jeopardising the chance of achieving global nutrition-related targets.\(^7\)
KEY DEFINITIONS

Healthy diets - ‘A healthy diet helps to protect against malnutrition in all its forms, including a range of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and conditions.’. It consists of the consumption of foods low in saturate, and industrially produced trans fats. Also, a limited intake of free sugars and salt/sodium. People are encouraged to eat fruits, vegetables, and other dietary fibre such as whole grains.9

Food system transformation - the actions needed to change how food is produced, processed, and sold to increase supply of and demand for healthy, environmentally sustainable diets – and identification of “how” – a range of supply and demand side strategies for regulation and reform.10

Planetary health - the concept that acknowledges the inextricable link between the health of our planet and human health. If we do not protect our natural systems, and continue to promote endless consumption, limitless production without respecting boundaries, both our health and that the planet will be disrupted in the future.11

Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs) - ‘Ultra-processed foods are defined as industrial formulations which, besides salt, sugar, oils, and fats, include substances not used in culinary preparations, in particular additives used to imitate sensorial qualities of minimally processed foods and their culinary preparations’.12

Obesogenic Environments - an environment is defined as obesogenic when it adversely affects healthy nutrition and physical activity. Today, we live in environments where the proliferation of cheap and available high-energy density food dominates, while opportunities to be physically active are reduced: people live in obesogenic environments which are not conducive to good health and increase the burden of malnutrition, including overweight and obesity. Commercial factors such as marketing strategies and high lobbying powers employed by large, processed food corporations are also contributing to the failure of the food system to deliver nutritious diets.13

Sustainability - the ability of the food system to be maintained without depletion and exhaustion of its natural resources or compromises to its health and integrity.14

Food Security - the state in which global citizens have physical and economic access to consume ample, safe, and nutritious foods – that meets their needs and preferences to lead a healthy and active life.15
WHAT IS A FOOD SYSTEM?

Food systems are multisectoral, interdisciplinary infrastructures encompassing all the processes and stakeholders involved in food and feeding.⁷

This includes the:

- **Food supply chain** i.e., materials, production, transportation, processing, manufacturing, retailing, and consumption of food.¹⁶
- **Personal and external food environments**, including the spaces in which people make decisions about food, and the foods themselves.¹⁷
- **Commercial determinants** - practices that promote products and choices that contribute to ill-health. These are mainly used by the private sector and include -marketing, lobbying, commercial citizenship etc.¹⁸
- **Consumer behaviour**— choosing where and what food to acquire, prepare, cook, store, and eat. This is influenced by political and economic, sociocultural, and demographic drivers.

These four domains have major societal outcomes on food security, population health, and social welfare.¹⁹

WHY DO FOOD SYSTEMS MATTER FOR OBESITY?

In 2019, *The Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition, and Climate Change* was published, looking at the relationship between three pandemics: obesity, undernutrition and climate change.⁷ The report highlighted that the rising prevalence of obesity can be partially attributed to broken food systems and their inability to provide healthy, sustainable and nutritious diets. Food systems also play a key role in the ongoing climate crisis and are responsible for 25-30% of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)⁷. Similarly, natural disasters are likely to have a direct influence on the availability, quality, and nutritional content of food. Current modes of transportation and globalisation directly impact both obesity and generate between 14-25% of GHGs while promoting physical inactivity.⁷ ³²

Ultimately, food systems and obesity are inextricably linked with the UN **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), considered a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.” Although neglected in predecessor targets, obesity is a relevant and essential component of the global development agenda.²⁰ If we are to achieve Target 3.4 on reducing premature mortality from NCDs, we need to address all forms of malnutrition (SDG2)²⁰ and address the coexistence of overweight/obesity

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¹ Physical activity confers significant physical and mental health benefits for everyone, including people living with overweight and obesity (read *World Obesity’s policy dossier on physical activity* to learn more).
and undernutrition – sometimes in the same country, household and even individual – and strengthen global food systems.

Target 11.3 can also be viewed from an obesity and food systems lens. It is a call to enhance “inclusive and sustainable urbanisation.” However, without access to affordable, healthy food, for example, best practices taught on leading healthy diets will be harder to sustain in the long-term.

URBANISATION AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Today, over 50% of the world’s population live in cities, a number expected to increase to close to 70% in the next 20 years. Cities are often diverse and inequitable places faced with a wide number of public health challenges, including a rising prevalence of obesity. Urbanisation has significantly altered the way we produce, access, consume and market food. These changes associated with urban lifestyles have altered our relationship with food and feeding and shifted the way in which food is valued.

One important trend has been towards greater availability and thus consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPFs). Although a bigger issue in urban areas, the consumption of UPFs is also a concern in rural areas where access to and availability of restaurants and supermarkets is less. These include soft drinks, packaged snacks, cookies and biscuits, candies, ready to-eat or ready-to-heat meals are marketed pervasively. UPFs are often cheaper and more available compared to nutrient-rich and fresh foods due
to their low production cost and high market value.\textsuperscript{26} In light of some of the powerful marketing techniques used by the industry, and the overwhelming evidence of the influence of commercial determinants of health, it is essential to build coalitions and engage all stakeholders, while ensuring safeguarding processes are in place for conflict of interest.

For more information on food systems drivers of obesity, visit the World Obesity Federation Global Obesity Observatory report. The report presents a collation of data pertaining to country-specific obesity drivers - such as data on insufficient activity, and consumption of various food groups in the EU and UK.

**FOOD SYSTEMS ASSOCIATED COSTS**

There are several direct and indirect costs associated with the failures we are experiencing across food systems. Diet-related health costs linked to mortality and NCDs are projected to exceed 1.3 trillion USD per year, and “greenhouse gas emissions associated with current dietary patterns are estimated to be more than 1.7 USD trillion per year by 2030.”\textsuperscript{27}

At the same time, healthy diets also remain unaffordable for 57% of the world’s population and out of reach for around 3 billion people,\textsuperscript{28} with increasing numbers in Africa (965 million), Latin America and the Caribbean (104.2 million) between 2017 and 2019.\textsuperscript{28}

![Figure 2. Number of people unable to afford a healthy diet around the world. Source: SOFI report, 2021](image-url)
In many lower- and lower-middle income settings, individuals spend between 50-90% of their mean per-capita household income to consume a healthy diet. In some scenarios, the cost of eating healthy nutritious food is often more than their wages or unaffordable if considering housing, transportation, education, and health care. Food insecurity can therefore lead to increased consumption of calorific processed foods that are poor quality and increase the risk of developing obesity. This further widens the socioeconomic gap in obesity rates – as those with lower buying power are pushed towards the consumption of less nutritious foods.

**FOOD SYSTEMS, OBESITY AND COVID-19**

COVID-19 has been a stark reminder of the need for all individuals to have access to healthy, nutritious food. In the early phases of COVID-19, the pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in the current food system, our surrounding environments, and the absence of processes to protect the health of vulnerable populations. People living with obesity have been found to be more at risk from COVID-19 compared to people of a healthy weight, with higher death rates in countries where over 50% of the population is overweight. Countries with high obesity rates have experienced 88% of all COVID-19 related deaths.

With global nutrition targets already off-track, COVID-19 is further jeopardising reaching the 2025 goals while igniting a new sense of urgency. By 2022, the pandemic could even result in increases in childhood stunting and wasting, in addition to overweight and obesity.

As we all work to recover from COVID-19, we can be optimistic in the opportunities it has presented, including to redesign food systems to support human and planetary, with a focus to providing and nutritious diets to everyone.
FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

Food system transformation can be achieved by introducing multisectoral policies that support the establishment of a healthy, fair, and nutritious food system, removing the focus from individual responsibility, and exposing the true cost of unhealthy foods for human and the planet. If redesigned to specifically address the major drivers of obesity, food systems can provide affordable healthy diets that are sustainable and inclusive, and become a powerful driving force towards ending hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms. ‘Double-duty’ or ‘triple duty’ actions will be needed to the common drivers of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change simultaneously. You can see examples below and in World Obesity’s Policy Brief on the Global Syndemic.

To enhance the capacity of countries and cities to transition to a healthier and more sustainable food system, and implement such actions multiple actors will need to be involved:

- Governments and policymakers – design and implement policies, using regulatory frameworks, to protect the health of their citizens.
- Food industry – reformulate food products so they are healthier, look at transport networks and methods, source produce locally and support small-scale farmers.
- Civil society - advocate for citizen rights to healthy food, and to hold industry and governments to account for their action or inaction.
- Youth – family farming, agriculture, and related initiatives to learn best practices and support local food production in years to come. At present, only 5% of young people under the age of 35 are involved in farming in the EU.23

A transition to healthier and more sustainable food systems will increase financial gains, which could in turn be invested in making healthier diets more affordable. It has been estimated that a shift from unhealthy diets can reduce both direct and indirect health costs by up to 97%, social costs incurred from greenhouse gas emissions increased by between 41-47% in the 2030 decade of action.
AN OVERVIEW OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOOD SYSTEM

Across Europe, the prevalence of overweight and obesity in both adults and children is rising dramatically, with more than 50% of the adult population living with overweight or obesity.33 The rising prevalence can, at least in part, be attributed to food environments, commercial and consumer determinants. This includes but is not limited to the marketing strategies employed by large, processed food companies to engage customers and boost profits.
Furthermore, urbanisation has been associated with a shift from traditional diets towards ultra-processed foods. Despite WHO’s recommendations that less than 10% of total energy intake should come from free sugars, only eight countries in Europe are meeting these recommendations.\(^{36}\) Meanwhile, data on sodium intake exemplifies that WHO recommendations on 2g sodium/day are not being met with the daily average across Europe ranging from 3-4g/day.\(^{33}\) Issues relating to food waste as well as inadequate soil, which in turn impacts crop availability and access to healthy diets, prevail.\(^{33}\)

**EU ACTION ON FOOD SYSTEMS**

There are several initiatives across the EU which aim to improve well-being and health of its citizens by improving food systems. The **European Green Deal** presents ambitious aims for the EU to be the world’s first climate-neutral continent by 2050. It proposes actions to protect the planet, fast-track the clean energy transition, to facilitate changes in transport, agriculture amongst others. They are aligned with global targets set out in the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

The **Farm to Fork Strategy** is pivotal to the European Commission’s efforts to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It sets out a roadmap to support the European Green Deal’s carbon neutral goals. The strategy “addresses comprehensively the challenges of sustainable food systems and recognises the inextricable links between healthy people, societies and a planet”.\(^{34}\) It was developed considering recognition that shifts to sustainable food systems will offer environmental, health, economic and social gains.\(^{35}\) Concrete commitments of the strategy include the development of a legislative framework for sustainable food systems by 2023, indicating comprehensive principles and requirements on the sustainability of food systems.\(^{36}\)

**Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan** was also launched to accelerate progress on cancer prevention, treatment, and care builds on the existing policy packages, and includes concrete recommendations to transform the food environment.\(^{37}\) Complementing the 27 regulatory and/or non-regulatory actions recommended by the Farm to Fork Strategy\(^{35}\), it has committed to consider action on sugar taxation. Restrictions on the marketing of food and beverages to children is also incentivised as a means of securing access to healthy, nutritious food.\(^{37}\)

More recently, the **European Child Guarantee (2021)** adopted by the European Commission Council provides guidance to improve children’s access to healthy nutrition through early childhood education and provision of healthy school meals.\(^{38}\) It recognises the importance of addressing socio-economic inequalities across generations, ensuring food systems serve children appropriately as a fundamental human right.\(^{38}\)

\(^{33}\) Romania, Portugal, Slovenia, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Finland, and Luxembourg
The EU has deployed an unprecedented research effort to promote the global transition to sustainable food systems, and has committed to participate in international fora and events including the Nutrition for Growth Summit and UN Food Systems Summit 2021. These events aim to identify collective commitments and seek ambitious policy outcomes. The EU will also reinforce the provision of accurate information to consumers and work on legislative frameworks to promote a higher uptake of sustainability standards. The European Parliament and Council are also expected to join forces to ensure the delivery of the strategy in a coherent, coordinated manner.
KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR FOOD SYSTEMS ACROSS EUROPE

Below we highlight key considerations for supporting the appropriate implementation of policies that are crucial to transform food systems for human and planetary health. The recommendations support delivery of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, and Green Deal presenting ample opportunities for action.

1. Establish multisectoral policies which support a healthy, fair, and nutritious food system and remove the focus from individual responsibility.

2. Develop double- and triple-duty actions that can simultaneously address the growing burden of undernutrition, overweight/obesity, and climate change. Understanding the common drivers and interactions between nutrition, health and climate will support transformative change to our food systems and present win-win opportunities for change.

3. Strengthen monitoring and accountability systems to create healthy food environments. Monitoring and accountability systems that benchmark, compare, and monitor progress can help incentivise change and hold public and private sector actors to account for action or inaction.

4. Update dietary guidelines to include sustainability considerations and recommendations for the consumption of UPFs. Dietary guidelines are often available at the national level but do not make explicit recommendations to prefer minimally processed foods.

5. Disincentivise the consumption of unhealthy foods and beverages by implementing marketing regulations and increasing health and nutrition education. To date, we have seen a focus on restrictions on unhealthy food marketing to children. A shift towards marketing for healthy food products will build a food environment where the healthy choice is seen as the easy choice.

6. Support small- and medium-enterprise farmers with subsidies and tax incentives, in particularly women and youth developing innovative solutions for sustainable, green, and local food production. Subsidies and tax incentives will build resilience and market access for local producers and shorter supply chains. Governments need to enhance economic investments in agriculture to make it more attractive for young people.

7. Improve social protection systems by providing families, particularly those with young children, with the financial support to access healthy and nutritious diets. Governments have a responsibility to support all people to make healthier choices. This should go beyond cash and voucher donations, and include integrating nutrition counselling, food provision and breastfeeding support into social protection.

8. Give young people a seat at the table during decision-making processes. Today, our world is home to the largest generation of young people in history. In 2020 there were 1.21 billion individuals aged between 15 - 24, and predicted to rise to 1.4 billion by 2065. As the current and future generation of leaders, policymakers and voters, youth around the world offer valuable and unique perspectives on how to create healthier and fairer food environments.

9. Human rights – all individuals have the right to nutrition. Their best interests must be at the front and centre of efforts to create healthy food environments.

10. Nutrition policies must make concerted efforts to prevent and manage conflict of interest (COI) and industry interference. Operational tools to prevent and manage COI include codes of ethics/conduct, transparency procedures and training of staff. The food and drink industry should not be involved in policy design processes and introduction of policy measures.
Below are a range of case studies of actions that have been undertaken by governments, businesses, and civil society to support food system transformation. They include government initiatives, youth-led campaigns, farm initiatives from across the world to highlight the wide range of actions that can be taken to transform food systems in different contexts and show that there is no one size fits all solution.

THE MILAN URBAN POLICY FOOD PACT

The Milan Urban Policy Food Pact was launched by the Milan municipality in 2015. It aims to coordinate and align global efforts to develop a sustainable food system using a ‘human rights-based framework that minimises waste and conserves biodiversity while adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change’.

The Framework for Action consists of six categories, 37 recommended actions, and action-specific indicators to evaluate success towards cooperation and sustainable urban food systems.

Overweight and obesity is a designated indicator to measure progress on sustainable diets and nutrition.

One of the recommended actions is to ‘address non-communicable diseases associated with poor diets and obesity, giving specific attention where appropriate to reducing intake of sugar, salts, trans fats, meat, and dairy products, and increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables and non-processed foods.’

Thus far, the pact has 211 signatory cities. It has been presented and discussed at six global, and 14 regional fora to foster the fruition of partnerships. As an incentive, cities that have made significant progress towards indicators, and delivered commitments are granted a ‘Milan Pact Award.’ The award motivates other signatory cities to deliver their promises and celebrates progress in the global urban food agenda.

This case study is an example of multisectoral policies that integrate a human-rights approach (recommendation 1 and 9).
The **Food Sustainability Index** (FSI) was developed by the **Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition Foundation** (BCFN) in collaboration with the **Economist Intelligence Unit** to raise awareness and provide scientifically sound analyses and data.

In the SDG Framework, nutritional challenges, agriculture, and food loss and waste are analysed in 78 countries through 38 indicators. The FSI serves as one example of a benchmarking tool highlighting the performance of countries and offering examples of best practices at the national level. The assessment of food systems in the EU Member States as well as the United Kingdom highlighted the following:

- Overweight and obesity is a serious challenge from which no EU country is exempt.
- Most citizens do not reach recommended physical activity levels and have a high sodium intake.
- Nutrition education is compulsory in many countries and updated healthy eating guidelines are published on a national level but only in a few cases do they integrate environmental concerns.
- Agriculture is responsible for about 10% of EU GHG emissions, but efforts have constantly increased sustainability, and the EU is at the forefront of global climate deals and actions with the European Green Deal.
- Over 20% of the food produced in the EU is wasted, accounting for 88 million tons per year (6% of total EU GHG emissions).

The EU analysis aims to increase knowledge, promote sustainable food production and consumption, policy coherence and financial mobilisation to balance the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainability.

*This case study showcases one example of how data and monitoring can be used to benchmark country progress towards improving food systems against specific criteria (recommendation 3)*
The Act4Food Act4Change is a youth-led movement launched in May 2021 to defeat hunger, improve health, and heal the planet. The pledge campaign urges leaders to act boldly and swiftly towards positive, sustainable change that transforms our worlds’ food system. The movement is facilitated by two non-profit organisations, The Food Foundation, and Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) to ensure smooth delivery of campaign initiatives to address food insecurity, malnutrition, climate change, water sanitation, and access to healthy nutrition and diets.

At the heart of the campaign, is a group of growing, and passionate ‘youth leaders’ who are engaging in advocacy and providing strategic support and contributions to deliver the campaign. Their pledge invites youth and other allies to demand urgent large-scale action from decision-makers around the world. To build on the pledge, youth are also invited to specify up to five actions they would like governments and businesses to take. There are ‘17’ ‘Actions4Change’ each linked to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals.

Youth leaders presented the final shortlisted ‘Actions4Change’ at the UN FSS, September 2021. Their advocacy efforts will continue in the lead-up to the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) and Nutrition for Growth Summit, in November and December 2021. The campaign reiterates the desire for young people to get their voices heard.

*This case study is an example of youth engagement in practice (recommendation 8)*
BUILDING FOOD AND NUTRITION RESILIENCE (QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES)

The Quezon City is one of the most crowded cities of the Philippines and home to over 3 million inhabitants. The city also experiences the triple burden of malnutrition with undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and soaring rates of overweight/obesity prevailing within the same community, particularly amongst children and adolescents. In Quezon City, 17.4% of children are underweight, 6.7% are wasted, and 19.9% are living with overweight and obesity.

Mayor Belmonte has responded by convening a Task Force to focus on food insecurity related matters in the city – both in the short, and long term. The group was established with the objective of strengthening local food production, creating a resilient food supply chain that is equally equipped to respond to natural disasters and risks posed by climate change. In the past decade, the city has implemented policies and programmes to address some of the issues highlighted above. One of these includes the assignment of an Anti-Junk Food and Sugary Drinks Ordinance to support children and adolescents in schools’ settings.

Quezon City has committed to the C40 Good Food Cities Declaration. By becoming a signatory of the declaration, it is supporting an overall increase of healthy plant-based food consumption by shifting away from unsustainable, unhealthy diets. Quezon City’s efforts to improve its food system is likely to thrive with continued leadership at both the highest level, and within the community. Its Task Force is a cross-sectoral, diverse group that facilitates comprehensive programming efforts that address the system-wide complexities. Engagement of community leaders, volunteers, business representatives and farms has also been crucial to galvanising political momentum and commitment to accelerate action towards the SDGs, mitigate impacts of COVID-19 and influence the global food systems agenda.

This case study showcases good governance and coordinated, multi-sectoral action (recommendation 1)
GARDENS FOR HEALTH INTERNATIONAL, ADDRESSING MALNUTRITION IN RWANDA

Rwanda has shown minimal progress towards achieving diet-related NCD targets.\textsuperscript{43} It is estimated that 33\% of children under the age of 5 are malnourished, with only 17\% of children under 2 eating an adequate diet.\textsuperscript{44} While four-fifth of the population produces food as part of their daily job,\textsuperscript{44} the rise in chronic malnutrition may be in part, due to low dietary diversity and micronutrition deficiency, rather than farming efficiency and productivity.

To address this issue \textit{Gardens for Health International} was established in 2007. The organisation works with pregnant women, mothers, and children to educate them on best practices for nutrition, including agricultural techniques. Through a partnership with community health clinics, the program delivers culturally relevant guidance on creating low-cost, time-saving nutritious meals. The holistic program addresses farming productivity by delivering ‘hands-on training in skills like composting, creating organic pesticides, and other techniques to maximize crop yields using resources readily available to families in rural Rwanda’.\textsuperscript{45} Results include:

- In 2020 alone, GHI forged 93,046 partnerships with like-minded organisations.\textsuperscript{44}
- After completing the programme, participants often grew two or three times the number of crop varieties compared with when they start.\textsuperscript{45}
- After completing the programme, participants had improved prenatal and postnatal health practices, hygiene behaviours and diets.\textsuperscript{44}

In 2020, 73\% of mothers and 77\% of children met dietary diversity standards after completing the programme. i.e., they consumed four out of five food groups within 24 hours.\textsuperscript{44}

\textit{This case study is an example of integrating social protection within a food programme (recommendation 7)}
The NOVA food classification system and the promotion and consumption of UPFs is increasingly recognised, proving to be relevant for understanding the impacts of food systems worldwide. The Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population, published in 2014 by the Ministry of Health, were pioneers in using this classification as the basis for their recommendations, establishing the golden rule to prefer natural or minimally processed foods and their culinary preparations. Their recommendations served as a basis for the implementation of many national educational programs and public health policies.

Highlights include the:

- Inclusion of the Guidelines’ recommendations in protocols for nutrition counselling in primary health care services and in scholarly textbooks,
- Resolution that prohibited the supply, marketing, and advertising of UPFs in work environments linked to the Ministry of Health,
- The update to the National School Feeding Program guidelines, that strongly restricts purchases of UPFs.

In recent years, evidence about harmful effects of UPFs has been also addressed in the recommendations of some international entities such as the FAO, the Pan American Health Organization, and the Lancet Obesity Commission, in addition to national dietary guidelines of other countries such as Uruguay, Peru, and Ecuador.

This case study is an example of best practice dietary guidelines that account for the consumption of UPFs (recommendation 4).
CONCLUSION

The aim of this policy brief is to provide guidance to policymakers, CSOs and other key stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of guidelines, policies, and interventions to transform food systems. It is complementary to the information available through the World Obesity’s policy dossier and policy laboratory. The compiled evidence reiterates that food systems must deliver affordable, healthy diets to halt the rise in overweight and obesity. Food systems must be transformed to avoid economic costs and costs to planetary and human health. In doing so, ‘double-duty’ or ‘triple-duty actions’ that address the common drivers of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change simultaneously through systems-level interventions are likely to be the most effective.

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