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Topic: Law and regulation in public health nutrition

Title: Systematic Review of National Nutrition Policies in OECD countries

Presentation Type: Oral

Introduction: Trustworthy evidence to inform national nutrition policies is essential to improve population diets and reduce obesity. However systematic reviews addressing policy relevant questions are lacking.

Methods: 19 bibliographic databases and organisation's websites were systematically searched (2002-2013) to identify content and evaluation of national nutrition policies of OECD countries. Quality was assessed; data were extracted and synthesised.¹

Results: Of 34 OECD countries, 30 nutrition policies and 26 policy evaluations (including 4 economic) were identified for 21 countries. Content of all national nutrition policies focused on education strategies promoting healthy eating, predominantly in children; 44% mentioned unhealthy choices specifically. <40% included contemporary social marketing; none comprised 'eat less' messaging other than for salt. 26% included voluntary, self-regulatory controls on marketing to children; only 3 were mandatory. 35% included food labelling and 30% product reformulation. 83% covered school and/or health settings food supply; <25% encompassed unhealthy foods. 18% addressed food environments more broadly. <15% mentioned environmental sustainability. Those targeting vulnerable groups included children (78%), infants/breastfeeding (57%), pregnant/lactating women (48%), low socioeconomic groups (44%) and elderly (9%). Most fiscal interventions were formative (e.g. intended "to investigate"); <16% actually included differential taxation or subsidies. 35% contained measurable targets. 100% and 86% respectively intended to monitor diet-related health and food/nutrient intake; none monitored food environments. Regulatory and legislative reforms were identified as the most cost-effective approaches, but were included rarely.

Conclusions: Few examples of comprehensive, evidence-informed national nutrition policies were identified. Therefore, it is unsurprising that rates of obesity and diet-related chronic diseases are increasing.

