

EDITORIAL

The WHO European Region's ambition for food and nutrition to 2030: achieving healthy and sustainable diets for all

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Healthy diets and nutrition have never been so high on the political agenda, both globally and at the level of the WHO European Region. The same is perhaps said of many health topics, but in recent years there has been a genuine scaling up in terms of commitments by governments to the topics of obesity, unhealthy diets and the double burden of malnutrition.

For the first time, the Sustainable Development Goals commit governments to address all forms of malnutrition and prevent avoidable premature mortality from noncommunicable diseases. This covers a wide spectrum of challenges, from improving maternal, infant and young child nutrition through to tackling diet-related diseases associated with overweight and excess intake of saturated fat, trans fats, salt and sugar. These goals, universal and indivisible, are as relevant to European countries as to any other country in the world, and demand greater policy action if the targets are to be met by 2030. Indeed, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed a Decade of Action on Nutrition in 2016 to trigger intensified action to ensure universal access to healthier and more sustainable diets – for all people.

Analysis of the latest data shows that unhealthy diets are the leading risk factors undermining health and well-being in the European Region. Responding to the challenge involves many different policy actions and requires collaboration across many different sectors – something the Region has been grappling with for many years. Ministers of Member States in the Region restated their commitment to the issue in the ground-breaking Vienna Declaration on Nutrition and Noncommunicable

Diseases in the Context of Health 2020, which called for decisive and concerted action for the prevention of obesity and diet-related noncommunicable diseases. Strategies to improve dietary health were then outlined in the unanimously-endorsed WHO European Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2015–2020. This called for cross-sector action to improve healthy food environments, action to improve nutrition across the life-course from pre-conception to older age and better routine surveillance. As such, the European Region has a defined policy framework and tools available to achieve these common goals. The most pressing challenge is now implementation.

This special issue of *Public Health Panorama*, “Turning the tide on obesity and unhealthy diets”, looks at many of the cutting-edge issues that governments face in meeting their goals. Topics explored in this outstanding collection of articles include: taxation of sugary drinks, consumer-friendly front-of-pack labelling, school food policies and public procurement, weight management in primary care, anthropometry, dietary surveillance and much more.

I believe this collection of scientific articles will be of significant value to policy-makers, researchers and civil society. It is particularly timely as we move to the midway point in the implementation of the WHO European Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2015–2020. While the articles demonstrate enormous progress in terms of the available evidence and our understanding of effective policies and interventions, they should galvanize us to be more ambitious in our collective efforts to build a healthier Europe. ■