



# The Eatwell project: Nutritional Policies in Europe and their effectiveness

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# Background to Eatwell



- An obesity ‘epidemic’
  - Implications for health (€70b per year European health care costs)
- Poor diet quality may impose even greater costs
- Concern about the sustainability of health care systems
- Economic productivity also suffers
- Governments have recognised the scale of the problem and are anxious to reverse current trends
- A desire that policy be ‘evidence-based’

**Benchmarking nutrition policies, evaluation and success stories**

**Quantitative evaluation of the effectiveness of intervention**

**Private sector marketing effectiveness and relevance to public sector marketing**

**Public acceptance of interventions**

**Propose effective policy interventions, methods of evaluation and data collection priorities for the future**

**Communication and management**



The University of Reading



**Istituto Nazionale di Ricerca per gli Alimenti e la Nutrizione**

Ente di ricerca di diritto pubblico sottoposto alla vigilanza del Ministero delle Politiche Agricole Alimentari e Forestali.



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# Definitions used by EATWELL

- Policy interventions: *any government action which can affect people's healthy eating behaviour by*
  - (a) *supporting more informed choice;*
  - (b) *changing the market environment*
- Healthy eating: *the adherence to the nutrition recommendations of WHO and eating to maintain healthy weight*

# Method of policy effectiveness assessment

- Identification of interventions through:
  - information services of governmental websites
  - direct consultation with policy makers and local public servants
  - previous reviews, reports and literature
  - Eatwell case studies

# Number and Type of Diet and Health Measures in the EU identified by Eatwell (March 2010)

Measures supporting informed choice		Changing the market environment	
Type	No.	Type	No.
Advertising controls	5	Fiscal Measures	3
Public information campaigns	38	Regulate (school) meals	14
Nutrition education	35	Nutrition-related standards	1
Nutritional information on menus in restaurants	0	Government action to encourage private sector action	9
Nutritional labelling	4	Availability measures for disadvantaged consumers	2
<b>TOTAL (informed choice)</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>TOTAL (market)</b>	<b>29</b>

+ Review of relevant non-EU policies & academic studies



# Common evaluation gaps

- Inappropriate outcome variables (e.g. focus on exposure, awareness, intentions, attitudes etc.)
- Inappropriate measurement (self-reporting)
- No counterfactual consideration
- Inappropriate sampling (self-selection biases)
- Diet response, but uncertain diet-health relationship (creating problems for cost-effectiveness)
- No estimate of longer term response
- Compensating behaviours and substitutions ignored



# Econometric methods for policy evaluation

Using secondary, mostly large-sample multi-purpose survey data, not collected for analysis of specific interventions

Some of the methods available:

- ‘Difference in difference’ methods
- Micro-simulations
- Propensity score matching
- Regression discontinuity
- Panel data methods



# Own evaluations (selected case studies)

Case study	Main findings
5-a-day (UK)	+0.3 portions (0.2-0.7 by income group)
5-a-day international (UK, Spain, Denmark)	+0.4 portions in Spain (fruit), no impact in DK
Salt campaign (UK)	10% reduction in salt intakes
Ofcom regulation (UK)	No clear effect when accounting for pre-existing trends
Vending machine ban (France)	Effective in schools (reduction up to 150 cal), evidence of compensation
Reformulation (international)	Effective for salt, trans-fats, but concern about levels in some foods and countries

# Review of past policies in Europe

Policy instrument	Reported evidence of positive impact	Estimation of cost-effectiveness (based on literature)
Advertising control	Suggestive (uncertainty on behaviours, long-term)	Cost-effective (if effective...)
Public information campaign	Suggestive (strong on attitudes, small on behaviours)	Cost-effective
Nutrition information on menus	Suggestive (compensating behaviours?)	No evidence
Nutritional education	Suggestive (uncertainty about larger scale outcomes)	Not cost-effective (discounting)
Fiscal measures (taxes)	Mixed (uncertainty about distributional impacts)	Cost-saving
Fiscal measures (subsidies)	Suggestive	Cost-effective
Nutritional labelling	Mixed (strong on awareness for users, mixed results on the dietary outcomes)	Cost-effective
Regulate meals in schools/working places	Suggestive	No clear evidence
Nutrition-related standards	Suggestive	Cost-effective
Government encouragement for reformulation in food sector	Suggestive (uncertainty about final outcomes)	Cost-effective
Disadvantaged consumer subsidies	Effective	Cost effective
Availability measures	Suggestive	No clear evidence

# How cost-effective are healthy eating policy interventions? OECD evidence

Policy/Intervention	Cost/DALY
Food advertising regulation	\$25,672
Food labelling	\$12,577
Mass media campaign	\$25,897
School-based interventions	>100,000
Worksite interventions	45,639
Fiscal measures	Cost-saving

**ACE study:** 10% tax on unhealthy food both improves health and saves costs.

# Reformulation cost effectiveness?

“it is estimated that a 1g average salt intake reduction across the UK population yields an average benefit of 56,660 QALYs per year” (FSA, 2009).

Valued at €35,000 per QALY implies a value of €2b!

The FSA argues in the absence of regulation, reformulation costs are all private....(i.e. Cost saving)



# Methodology for policy recommendations



- Review evaluations of interventions from Member States and non EU countries.
- Review evidence of effectiveness and cost-effectiveness from internationally peer-reviewed literature
- Survey of EU citizens in 5 countries on policy acceptability

# Methodology (contd)

- Draft recommendations discussed among all partners
- 4 workshops with policy makers, industry, consumer and other relevant NGO representatives for feedback
- Revised document discussed among all partners and fine-tuned

# Warnings!

- Unable to gather evidence on policy synergies, may be that the recommendations would be more effective together than the sum of their parts
- The evidence base is often weak.



# Measures supporting informed choice

- Small but generally positive effect on healthy eating and tend to be cost-effective.
- Well accepted by the public and stakeholders.
- However, informed choices are not necessarily healthy choices.



# Policies changing the market environment

- The potential to off-set the social costs of unhealthy eating.
- Cost effective
- Measures are more intrusive and therefore generally less well accepted by the public.



# Policy recommendations (selection)

Policy	Recommendation
Advertising controls	Children: a broader approach is needed Adults: not recommended
Social marketing	Recommended, but more focused and long-term Transfer best practices from commercial sector
Labelling	Front-of-pack, and in combination with other policies
Fiscal measures	Introduce, but ring-fence revenues and thorough evaluation of current experiences
Vending machines in schools	Selective products on sale, but ban is not recommended
Nutrition standards & reformulation	Promote voluntary reformulation, but mandatory for trans fats
Disadvantaged consumers	Introduce schemes like WIC and SNAP from the US. Further study of food deserts and availability measures.

# Conclusion on policy recommendations

- Strong need for more and better evidence of policy effectiveness to be collected.
- Despite only partial evidence on policy effectiveness, the case for action is urgent and there is sufficient evidence for the actions recommended.

# Selected Eatwell Publications

- Capacci et al. (2012), Policies to promote healthy eating in Europe: A structured review of instruments and their effectiveness. *Nutrition Reviews*, 70(3): 188-200
- Aschemann-Witzel et al. (2012), Lessons for public health campaigns from analysing commercial food marketing success factors: a case study. *BMC Public Health*, 12:139
- Shankar et al. (2012), An evaluation of the UK Food Standards Agency's salt campaign. *Health Economics*, on-line preview (forthcoming)
- Bech-Larsen and Aschemann-Witzel (2012). A Macro-marketing perspective on Food safety regulation: The Danish ban on trans fatty acids. *Journal of MacroMarketing*, 32(2): 208-219
- Pérez-Cueto et al. (2012), Assessment of Healthy Eating Policies Evaluation in Europe: A review within EATWELL Project. *Public Health Nutrition*, 15(8):1489-1496.
- Capacci and Mazzocchi (2011). Five-a-day, a price to pay: an evaluation of the UK program impact accounting for market forces. *Journal of Health Economics*, 30(1), 87-98

# Thank you

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