



# WHO Nutrient Profile Model for the Western Pacific Region

A tool to protect children  
from food marketing



World Health  
Organization  
Western Pacific Region



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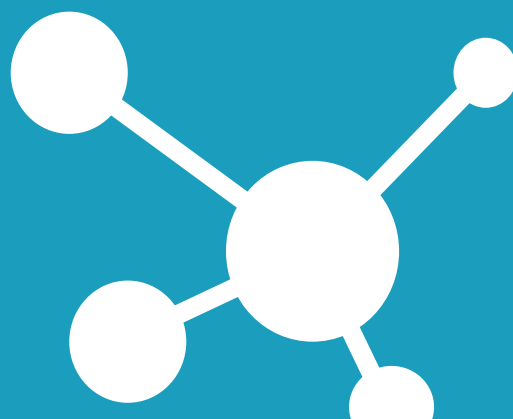
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## INTRODUCTION

*The Action Plan to Reduce the Double Burden of Malnutrition in the Western Pacific Region (2015–2020)* was published in 2014 and brings together nutrition-related actions from global and regional guidance documents to address diet-related diseases and reduce nutritional risk factors. The action plan was developed in response to resolution WPR/RC63.R2, endorsed by the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific in September 2012, on scaling up nutrition in the Western Pacific Region. The action plan creates a platform for Member States to accelerate action to address the double burden of malnutrition in partnership with civil society and relevant stakeholders. (1)

Objective 3 of the action plan aims to strengthen and enforce legal frameworks that protect, promote and support healthy diets. It recommends that WHO provide technical assistance to develop and implement effective national measures based on the *WHO Set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children*, which was endorsed in 2010 at the Sixty-third World Health Assembly. (1)

Implementation of the recommendations has progressed slowly both globally and in the Western Pacific Region. In 2016, no country globally had comprehensively implemented the recommendations. In the Western Pacific Region, only the Republic of Korea has legally enforceable measures to protect children from the harmful marketing of unhealthy foods and non-alcoholic beverages.

WHO has been working to help Member States develop nutrient profile models since 2009. The first nutrient profile model was published in the WHO European Region, followed by the WHO Region of the Americas, both in 2015. *Guiding Principles Framework and Manual for the Development or Adaptation of Nutrient Profile Models* was developed and field-tested in six different countries. (2) WHO has also developed a catalogue containing details of nutrient profile models that conform to certain standards. (3)

This regional nutrient profile model was developed by the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific in collaboration with Member States to support the efforts of countries in protecting children from marketing of unhealthy foods and non-alcoholic beverages and implementing the recommendations. Specifically, the model can help countries identify foods for which marketing to children should be prohibited.

The regional adaptation process consisted of three steps. In the first step, countries were identified to field-test the draft WHO Nutrient Profile Model from August to September 2015. The in-country pilot-testing involved eight countries (China, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Samoa and Viet Nam) applying the proposed model to a nationally generated list of 100–200 foods that are either frequently marketed to children, or commonly consumed by children

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## Introduction

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(ideally a combination of both). Countries were asked to comment on the food categories, the nutrient thresholds, and the proposed exclusions and prohibitions, and confirm that foods categorized by the model are in line with national food-based dietary guidelines.

In the second step, the Technical Meeting on the Regional Adaptation of the WHO Nutrient Profile Model was held in Manila, Philippines, 19–21 October 2015, with experts from the eight Member States that had field-tested the model. The objectives of the technical meeting were to share and review the field-test results from the WHO Nutrient Profile Model and to discuss the model's adaptability to the Western Pacific Region. Discussions during the meeting focused on the exclusion criteria and exemptions, food categories relevant to the Region, nutrients and other components to be added, reference amounts (per 100 g, per 100 kilojoules or per serving), thresholds reflecting regional foods and beverages, and numbers for thresholds. Participants at the technical meeting concluded that the draft nutrient profile model was adaptable to the Region and revised the model as necessary. (4) Participants welcomed the adaptation of the model, particularly for those countries that do not have tools in place to support the development and implementation of policies that restrict marketing to children.

In a third step, all countries and areas of the WHO Western Pacific Region were invited to comment from 10 February to 18 March 2016 on the draft model, which was developed during the meeting. Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Hong Kong SAR (China), Macao SAR (China), the Philippines and Singapore responded to the invitation.



## ABOUT THE WHO NUTRIENT PROFILE MODEL FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

Nutrient profiling is “the science of classifying or ranking foods according to their nutritional composition for reasons related to preventing disease and promoting health”. (3) Nutrient profiling has been recognized by WHO as a useful tool for a variety of applications and is considered to be a critical tool for the implementation of restrictions on the marketing of foods to children. (5) Nutrient profiling provides a means of differentiating between food and non-alcoholic beverages (henceforth “foods”) that are more likely to be part of a healthy diet from those that are less likely (notably those foods that may contribute to excess consumption of energy, saturated fats, trans fats, sugar and salt). Nutrient profiling is a tool to categorize foods, not diets, but can be used through policy to improve the overall nutritional quality of diets.

In 2015, the WHO Regional Office for Europe released a regional nutrient profile model for use and adaptation by Member States when developing policies to restrict food marketing to children. (6) The WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific has since worked with Member States and experts to develop a region-specific model.



## About the WHO Nutrient Profile Model for the Western Pacific Region

The final model consists of a total of 18 food categories featuring nutrient thresholds across saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, added sugar and sodium. The regional model maintained all 17 categories from the European nutrient model and added a new food category for “products made from soya” (e.g. tofu products, natto and tempeh).

To identify foods commonly marketed to children, countries included common media, such as television, advertisements before the showing of movies in cinemas, radio, newspapers, billboards and banners in front of convenience stores. Some countries, for example the Philippines, also included social media. Foods commonly consumed were identified by looking at household nutrition surveys in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Mongolia and the Philippines. Several countries used databases to assess the composition of foods and beverages including food consumption tables (in China, Malaysia and the Philippines) and nutrition facts from back-of-pack labels (in all participating countries). Where country-specific food composition tables were not available, food consumption tables from other neighbouring countries or subregional tables were used, for example Brunei Darussalam used Malaysia’s table while Samoa used the Pacific Food Composition Table. Countries did face challenges in field-testing the draft model, including the lack of information on nutrient contents (specifically on saturated and unsaturated fat, trans fat, and salt or sodium content) in food composition tables. Also, food labels in participating countries did not always have information on content of saturated fats, trans fats, salt/sodium, added sugar and sweeteners.

The nutrients covered by the model are: total fat, total sugar, added sugar, non-sugar sweetener, energy, saturated fat and sodium. Some nutrients and thresholds for food categories in the Western Pacific Region model were slightly changed from the European model. The nutrient salt was changed to sodium (g) and a more lenient nutrient threshold was introduced in total fat for “milk drinks” (increasing from 2.5g/100g to 4g/100g). Thresholds were added for the marketing of “fresh and frozen meat, poultry, fish and similar” for total fat (20g/100g). Unsweetened fresh coconut juice was included in Category 4a, as a common region-specific beverage. While processed, packaged coconut juices often contain more than 5g total sugars per 100g juice, unsweetened fresh coconut juice typically contains less. To enable marketing of unsweetened fresh coconut juice, a 5g/100g total sugars threshold was defined.

Several region-specific food items were added to the model as examples.

## About the WHO Nutrient Profile Model for the Western Pacific Region

These include buns with sweet fillings, flour-based confectionery, sugar-cane juices, sweetened creamer, evaporated milk, instant and premix coffees and teas, fermented milks, curds, lard, ghee, sago, tapioca, canned meat, ready-made sandwiches, steamed pork buns, creamed corn, fish fingers and fish balls, dried mushrooms, mango chutney, Quorn (a meat substitute made from fungus), coloured ketchups and spaghetti sauces. Teas and coffees were added to the “energy drink” subcategory.

According to the model, marketing to children for three categories should be prohibited, meaning that no nutrient criteria are required. These three categories include:

- Category 1 – chocolate and sugar confectionery, energy bars, and sweet toppings and desserts,
- Category 2 – cakes, sweet biscuits and pastries, and other sweet bakery products and dry mixes for making such, and
- Category 4c – energy drinks, tea and coffee.

Nutrient criteria are also not required for the one food category for which marketing is always permitted: Category 15 – fresh and frozen fruit, vegetables and legumes.

The following two exclusion criteria are applied in the model: marketing is prohibited if a product contains >1% of total energy in the form of industrially produced trans-fatty acids<sup>1</sup> or if the product contains ≥0.5% of total energy in the form of alcohol.

Products may be exempt from the model if a product falls under a protected geographical or quality-designated regime, or if a product is a traditional item associated with a celebratory event. In these cases, marketing may be permitted within a reasonable period prior to the event.

<sup>1</sup> This is in line with the WHO recommendation on trans-fat intake. It is recognized that some countries have implemented legislation that bans or virtually eliminates trans fats from the food supply and these countries may choose to adopt a per 100g figure in line with their statutory limits.



## HOW TO USE THE MODEL

This model is designed for use by governments for the purposes of restricting marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children<sup>2</sup>. When determining whether a food product may or may not be marketed to children, a government or food company should take the following steps.

1

Identify which food category the product falls under. In some cases this will be very clear according to the food category name, for example, breakfast cereals and yogurt. In other cases, it may be necessary to reference the “included in category” or “not included in category” columns.

2

Once the appropriate food category has been identified, the nutritional content of the food product must be cross-checked against the thresholds. If marketing is to be permitted, a food product must not exceed any of the relevant thresholds for that food product category (on a per 100 g/ml basis). For example, in the case of breakfast cereals, a product must not exceed the criteria for total fat, total sugars or salt.

3

The food products should, where possible, be assessed as sold or as reconstituted, if necessary, according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

4

If the marketing is for a restaurant meal, including a quick-service or take-away meal of two or more menu items, all items must individually meet the relevant nutrient criteria.

5

Subject to the exclusionary criteria: if a product falls under a protected geographical or quality-designated regime, then marketing may be permitted; if a product is a traditional item associated with a celebratory event, then marketing may be permitted within a reasonable period prior to the event.

2 The definition of marketing to children will need to be established as part of the policy development process and may vary according to national context. WHO has defined marketing as “any form of commercial communication or message that is designed to, or has the effect of, increasing the recognition, appeal and/or consumption of particular products and services. It comprises anything that acts to advertise or otherwise promote a product or service”. [7]



## DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THIS MODEL

**Total fat** refers to the total fat content of the food product, which may be composed of different levels of fatty acids from the three broad groupings: saturated fatty acids, monounsaturated fatty acids, and polyunsaturated fatty acids.

**Total sugars** refers to the total sugar content of the food product, which may be composed of intrinsic sugars incorporated within the structure of intact fruit and vegetables; sugars from milk (lactose and galactose); and all additional monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, plus sugars naturally present in honey, syrups and fruit juices.

**Added sugars** refers to monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods and beverages by the manufacturer, cook or consumer during processing or preparation. For the purpose of this nutrient profile model, the term 'added sugar' is used for consistency with available data in food composition tables. The WHO guidelines on sugars are for free sugars, covering monosaccharides (such as glucose or fructose) and disaccharides (such as sucrose or table sugar) added to foods by the manufacturer, cook or consumers in addition to sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit concentrates. In this case, intrinsic sugars in, for example, fruits and vegetables are not considered free sugars.

**Non-sugar sweeteners** are food additives (other than a monosaccharide or disaccharide sugar) that impart a sweet taste to a food. The technological purposes for this functional class include sweetener, intense sweetener and bulk sweetener. It should be noted that products such as sugars, honey and other food ingredients that can be used to sweeten are not associated with the term "sweetener".

**Energy** refers to the total chemical energy available in food and its macronutrient constituents (carbohydrates, fats and proteins).

**Saturated fat** refers to the major saturated fatty acids in the diet, namely C14, C16 and C18, except in the case of milk and coconut oil where saturated fatty acids range from C4 to C18.

**Industrially produced trans-fatty acids** refers to the major trans-fatty acids in the diet that are typically isomers of 18:1 trans derived from partial hydrogenation of vegetable oils, a technique that produces semi-solid fats for use in commercial baking and frying, margarines and food manufacturing.

**Sodium** refers to salt content of the food. 1 g of sodium is equivalent to about 2.5 g of salt.



# WHO NUTRIENT PROFILE MODEL FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

Food category		Included in category (examples)
1	Chocolate and sugar confectionery, energy bars, and sweet toppings and desserts	Chocolate (including milk, dark and white chocolate), chocolate spread, cereal, granola and muesli bars, hard/chewy candy, table sugars, flour-based confectionaries, spread including peanut butter, chewing gum, caramels, soft jellied candies, marshmallows, honey, puddings, cream desserts
2	Cakes, sweet biscuits and pastries, other sweet bakery products, dry mixes for making such	Buns with sweet fillings, cookies, breakfast biscuits, donuts
3	Savoury snacks	Popcorn and maize corn, nuts and mixed nuts (including with fruit content), savory biscuits, crackers, pretzels, other snacks made from rice, maize, wheat, dough or potato (i.e. chips, crisps), pork and chicken rind, processed seaweed
4	Beverages	
	a) Juices <sup>1</sup>	100% fruit and vegetable juices, (including sugar cane juices, juices reconstituted from concentrate, unsweetened fresh coconut juice), smoothies
	b) Milk drinks <sup>2</sup>	Milks and sweetened milks, reconstituted powdered milk, almond, soya, rice and oat milks, goat milk, condensed milk, milk shakes, sweetened creamer, evaporated milk
	c) Energy drinks, tea and coffee <sup>3</sup>	Energy drinks, tea (including instant and premixed tea with caffeine), coffee (including instant and premixed coffee)
	d) Other beverages	Other sugar-sweetened beverages, including softdrinks/sodas, juice drinks and flavoured waters, reconstituted chocolate or malted powdered drinks, syrups, mineral and/or flavoured waters (including aerated), powdered juices
5	Edible ices	Ice cream, iced lollies and sorbets, frozen fruit juices, frozen yogurt
6	Breakfast cereals	Chocolate breakfast cereals, oatmeals, mueslis, cornflakes
7	Yogurts, sour milk, cream, other similar foods	Yogurt, flavoured sour milk and drinking yogurt, cheese-based and other yogurt substitutes, fermented milk, curds
8	Cheese	Medium-hard and hard cheeses (i.e. cheddar), soft cheese (e.g. ricotta, mozzarella), sliced cheese, cream cheeses, spreadable cheeses, grated or powdered cheese, cottage cheese, processed cheese
9	Ready-made and convenience foods and composite dishes	Pizzas, lasagne, ready-made sandwiches, tinned spaghetti, instant noodles, instant porridge (e.g. congee), baked beans, creamed corn, steamed pork buns, dumplings, burgers in buns, ready meals, filled pastas, soups, French fries, buttered toasted bread

<sup>1</sup> This is in line with the WHO Guideline: Sugars intake in adults and children (WHO 2015) as fruit juices are a significant source of free sugars for children. Unsweetened fresh coconut juice was included in the juice category, as a common region-specific beverage. To enable marketing of unsweetened fresh coconut juice, a 5g/100g total sugars threshold was defined.

<sup>2</sup> This nutrient profile model applies to products for children above 36 months. Follow-up formulas and growing-up milks are not covered by the model. It should be noted that World Health Assembly Resolution WHA39.28 adopted in 1986, states that the practice of providing infants with specifically formulated milks (so called "follow-up milks") is not necessary. Further, any food or drink given before complementary feeding is nutritionally required may interfere with the initiation or maintenance of breastfeeding and should, therefore, be neither promoted nor encouraged for use by infants during this period.

KEY: NSS = non-sugar sweetener; SF=saturated fat

Not included in category (examples)	Customs tariff code*	Marketing prohibited if exceeds per 100 g						
		Total fat (g)	SF (g)	Total sugars (g)	Added sugars (g)	NSS	Sodium (g)	Energy (kcal)
Chocolate-flavoured breakfast cereals, cakes and pastries, biscuits and other baked goods covered in chocolate, Chinese jelly.	04.09; 17.01; 17.04; 18.06; some of 19.05; 20.06; some of 20.08; some of 21.06	Not permitted						
	19.01.20; 19.05.20; 19.05.31; 19.05.32	Not permitted						
	Some of 02.09; some of 02.10; 08.01; 08.02; 10.05; some of 12.12; 19.04.10; 19.04.20; some of 19.05; 20.05.20; 20.08.11; 20.08.19; 20.08.99				0		0.04	
Powdered juices	20.09			5		0		
	Some of 04.01; some of 04.02; 22.02.90	4			0	0		
Unsweetened herbal tea	21.01; some of 22.02	Not permitted						
100% fruit and vegetable juices, milk drinks	Some of 21.06; 22.01; some of 22.02				0	0		
	21.05	4		10		0	0.08	
	19.04.10; 19.04.20	10		15		0	0.64	
Milks and sweetened milks	Some of 04.20; 04.30; 04.04; some of 04.06.10; 19.01.10; 19.01.90; some of 21.06	4		10		0	0.08	
	04.06	20					0.52	
	Some of 16; some of 19.01.20; 19.02.19; 19.01.90; 19.02.20; some of 19.05; some of 20.05; 21.04	10	4	10			0.4	225

<sup>3</sup> There is no agreement on a definition of energy drinks. However such category of drinks includes a variety of non-alcoholic beverages. While caffeine is considered the main ingredient, a number of other substances are often present. The most common of these include guarana, taurine, glucuronolactone and vitamins. A common feature is that these beverages are marketed for their actual or perceived effects as stimulants, energizers and performance enhancers.

## WHO NUTRIENT PROFILE MODEL FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

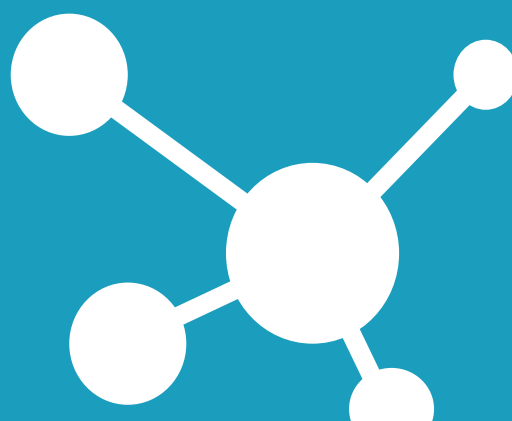
Food category		Included in category (examples)
10	Butter and other fats and oils	Butter, vegetable oils, margarine and spreads, lard, dripping, ghee
11	Bread, bread products and crisp breads	Bread (i.e. white, yellow, whole wheat), rotis, prata, wraps/tortillas, bread with raisins, buns, toast, cheese bread
12	Fresh or dried noodles, pasta, rice and grains	Dried and fresh noodles, sago, tapioca
13	Fresh and frozen meat, poultry, fish and similar	Turkey tails, chicken tail, lamb neck, mutton flap, eggs, oily fish (e.g. herring)
14	Processed meat, poultry, fish and similar	Sausage, ham, bacon, canned meat (e.g. Spam) and fish, chicken nuggets, fish fingers, fish balls, beef or chicken patty, liver paste
15	Fresh and frozen fruit, vegetables and legumes	Potatoes, roots crops, fresh coconut, mushrooms
16	Processed fruit, vegetables and legumes	Dried fruit <sup>4</sup> , dried coconut, coconut cream, marmalade, jams, tinned fruits, vegetables and legumes, dried mushrooms, preserved or pickled fruits and vegetables, fermented vegetables, mango chutney, Quorn (meat substitute made from fungus)
17	Products made from soya	Tofu products, natto, tempeh
18	Sauces, dips and dressings	Tomato ketchup, coloured ketchup, mayonnaise, salad dressing, soy sauce, fish sauce, sweet chili sauce, gravies, spaghetti sauce, barbecue sauces, seasonings, reconstituted stocks

<sup>4</sup>This is in line with the WHO Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children (WHO 2015), as dried fruits are a significant source of concentrated sugars for children. However, it is recognized that countries, according to national context and national food-based dietary guidelines, may take the decision to permit the marketing of dried fruits in small portions.



Not included in category (examples)	Customs tariff code*	Marketing prohibited if exceeds per 100 g						
		Total fat (g)	SF (g)	Total sugars (g)	Added sugars (g)	NSS	Sodium (g)	Energy (kcal)
	02.09; 04.05; 15		20		0	0	0.56	
Buttered toasted bread	19.01.20; 10.01.90; 19.05.10; 19.05.40; 19.05.90	10		10			0.48	
Filled pasta and pasta in sauce, instant noodles	10; some of 11; 19.02 excluding 19.02.20; 19.03	10		10			0.48	
	02 excluding 02.10; some of 03 excluding 03.05; 16.02	20						
Pepperoni pizza, curry chicken	02.10; some of 03; some of 16	20					0.68	
	07 excluding 07.10, 07.11, 07.12, 07.13; some of 08 excluding 08.01 (except 08.01.12); 08.02; 08.11; 08.12; 08.13; 08.14.	20					0.68	
Fruit juice	07.10; 07.11; 07.12; 07.13; 08.01.11; some of 08.03; some of 08.05; some of 08.06; 08.11; 08.12; 08.13; 08.14; 20.01; 20.02; 20.03; 20.04; 20.05; 20.06; 20.07; 20.08.20; 20.08.30; 20.08.40; 20.08.50; 20.08.60; 20.08.70; 20.08.80; 20.08.93; 20.08.97; 20.08.99	5		10	0		0.4	
Soya sauce, oils from soya, fresh soya beans	Some of 19.01; some of 20, some of 21.06	12		10	0		0.4	
	21.03	10			0		0.4	





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