

**Fifth Meeting of the WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert  
Advisory Group (NUGAG) Subgroup on Policy Actions**

*13, 17, 23 and 24 September 2021 (Virtual meeting)*

**SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

In response to a call from the 58th World Health Assembly (May, 2005), the World Health Organization (WHO) established the Guidelines Review Committee (GRC) in 2007 with the purpose of developing and implementing procedures to ensure that WHO guidelines are developed in ways consistent with internationally recognized best practices, emphasizing the appropriate use of systematically reviewed available evidence. The robust guideline development process being implemented by WHO is overseen by the Guideline Review Committee (GRC) and is described in detail in the *WHO Handbook for guideline development (2014)*.

In accordance with the Organization-wide transformation in strengthening WHO's role in developing evidence-informed public health guidance, the Department of Nutrition and Food Safety (NFS) has strengthened its role and leadership in providing evidence-informed policy and programme guidance to Member States for promoting healthy diets and nutrition throughout the lifecourse, in partnership with relevant internal departments and partners, and guided by the new WHO guideline development process. This normative mandate was reaffirmed through a request from the 63rd World Health Assembly (May, 2010) "to strengthen the evidence base on effective and safe nutrition actions to counteract the public health effects of the double burden of malnutrition, and to describe good practices for successful implementation". More recently WHO's commitment to strengthen its normative work was reiterated in the *13th General Programme of Work (2019 – 2023)* was endorsed by the 71st World Health Assembly (May 2018). It states that "Setting norms and standards is a unique function and strength of WHO" and further noted that WHO "will reinforce its science- and evidence-based normative work".

To implement the strengthening of evidence-informed nutrition guidance, NFS established in 2010 **WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG)**. **NUGAG is guided by the WHO Steering Committee for Nutrition Guideline Development**, which includes representatives from concerned Departments in WHO with an interest in the development and implementation of effective policy actions to promote healthy diets to improve nutrition and achieve public health goals. Membership in NUGAG is usually for three to four years and NUGAG includes experts from various WHO Expert Advisory Panels as well as experts from a larger roster including those identified through open calls for experts, taking into consideration a balanced mix of genders, breadth in areas of expertise and representation from all WHO Regions.

The NUGAG is generally expected to meet twice a year and will provide advice to WHO on the following:

1. The scope of the guidelines and priority questions (in PICO format) that will guide the undertaking of systematic reviews of evidence;
2. The choice and prioritization of important outcomes for decision-making and developing recommendations;
3. The examination and interpretation of the evidence with explicit consideration of the overall balance of risks and benefits;
4. The formulation of recommendations, taking into consideration the quality of evidence generated and compiled as well as diverse values and preferences, balance of benefits and harms, resource implications, priority of the problem, equity and human rights, acceptability and feasibility; and
5. The identification of research gaps.

The NUGAG Subgroup on Diet and Health, established in 2010 focusses on updating dietary goals for the prevention of obesity and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Updating of these dietary goals is an important element of WHO's efforts in implementing the NCD agenda, and achieving the 'triple billion' targets, including one billion more people enjoying better health and well-being.

In 2014, the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) called for action to address all forms of malnutrition, including undernutrition, overweight/obesity and diet-related NCDs, goals that were then taken up by the SDGs in 2015. The 68<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly (WHA) in May 2015, endorsed the ICN2 Declaration (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>) and the Framework for Action (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf>) and called on Member States to implement the ICN2 commitments through a set of voluntary policy options and strategies identified in the Framework for Action. Implementation of related policy measures for promoting healthy diets and nutrition noted in the ICN2 Framework of Action were also highlighted in a number WHO policy documents endorsed or adopted by WHA, such as the Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition (2012), Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs (2013), as well as in the Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity (2016). These policy measures include fiscal policies, labelling and marketing policies, trade and investment policies, and public food procurement policies among others.

Furthermore, in April 2016, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) declared a UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) ([http://www.who.int/nutrition/GA\\_decade\\_action/en/](http://www.who.int/nutrition/GA_decade_action/en/)), recognizing the role of nutrition in achieving the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Decade calls for eradicating hunger and preventing all forms of malnutrition worldwide, particularly stunting, wasting, and overweight in children under five years of age; and anaemia in women and children among other micronutrient deficiencies; as well as for reversing the rising trends in overweight and obesity and reducing the burden of diet-related NCDs in all age groups. Therefore, the goal of the Decade is to increase action at the national, regional and global levels in order to achieve commitment of the Rome Declaration adopted at ICN2, through implementing policy options included in the Framework for Action and evidence-informed programme actions.

The Political Declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases reaffirmed the importance to "*promote and implement policy, legislative and regulatory measures aiming at minimizing the impact of the main risk factors for non-communicable diseases, and promote healthy diets and lifestyles*" (A/RES/73/2). Developing guidelines on **policy actions** to promote healthy diets

and nutrition will, therefore, contribute greatly to the implementation of these various global commitments and ultimately to the achievement of health- and nutrition-related SDGs.

To provide evidence-informed WHO guidance on effective policy measures to support Member States in developing enabling food environment to promote healthy diets and nutrition, NFS initiated in 2017 the establishment of *the WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG) Subgroup on Policy Actions*, which will work alongside the NUGAG Subgroup on Diet and Health.

The first meeting of the NUGAG Subgroup on Policy Actions took place in December 2018, during which participants discussed and finalized the scope, PICO questions and priority outcomes to guide the undertaking of the systematic reviews and subsequently to formulate the recommendations for the **guidelines on nutrition labelling policies, policies to restrict marketing to children and fiscal policies**. The second meeting of the NUGAG Subgroup on Policy Actions took place in December 2019 during which participants reviewed the draft systematic reviews and formulated draft recommendations on nutrition labelling policies, policies to restrict marketing to children and fiscal policies, and also discussed and finalized the scope, PICO questions and priority outcomes to guide the undertaking of the systematic reviews and subsequently to formulate the recommendations for the guideline school food and nutrition policies.

The Safe, Healthy and Sustainable Diet Unit (CC Healthy Diets) of the new Department of Nutrition and Food Safety (NFS) established in January 2020 as part of the WHO's transformation process serves as the Secretariat of the NUGAG Subgroup on Diet and Health and also the NUGAG Subgroup on Policy Actions. The NUGAG is generally expected to meet physically, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a series of virtual meetings are planned for 2021 to progress the work of the NUGAG with a view to finalize pending guidelines. The first virtual meeting (i.e. the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting) was held on 8, 10 and 12 March 2021 during which participants reviewed the draft systematic reviews and formulated recommendations on school food and nutrition policies, the second virtual meeting (i.e. the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting) was held on 5, 6 and 9 July 2021 during which participants reviewed the draft systematic reviews and formulated recommendations on policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing, and the third virtual meeting (i.e. the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting) is now planned to be held for three hours each day on 13, 14 and 17 September 2021.

## Objectives and expected outcomes

The objectives of the fifth meeting are to:

1. Review the outcomes of the final systematic review on the effectiveness of fiscal and pricing policies to promote healthy diets with a view to assess the certainty of the existing evidence;
2. Formulate the recommendations on fiscal policies and determine the strength of recommendations, through, taking into consideration:
  - the certainty of the evidence; and
  - detailed contextual factors, such as the balance of evidence on benefits and harms, values, resource implications, priority of the problems, equity and human rights, acceptability and feasibility, as assessed through an addition review

3. Review and identify implications for future research, taking into account on-going research and any existing controversies; and
4. Review implications or possible challenges for implementation of the guideline.

The **expected outcomes** of the fifth meeting are, therefore, draft final recommendations (including rationale and remarks, as required) on fiscal policies to promote healthy diets.