Levels of childhood overweight and obesity are increasing in the Eastern Mediterranean Region with serious negative health consequences, including type II diabetes and hypertension, with implications also for children's mental well-being.

Many factors contribute to child overweight, including aggressing marketing strategies targeting children, encouraging consumption of food and drinks, high in sugar, salt and trans fat.

At the Fifty-fifth Session of the Regional Committee, Member States endorsed resolution (RC54/R9), which called on Member States of the Region to exert control on the marketing of food and beverages to children in various settings, including schools.

In May 2010, at the Sixty-third World Health Assembly, WHO Member States endorsed a set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children through resolution WHA63.14. The recommendations clearly acknowledge the relationship between food marketing and childhood obesity and their main purpose is to guide efforts by Member States in designing new and/or strengthening existing policies on food marketing communications to children in order to reduce the impact on children of marketing of foods high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, free sugars, or salt.

In May 2012, WHO published a framework document for implementation of the set of recommendations that seeks to provide guidance to Member States in operationalizing these recommendations, as well as monitoring and evaluating progress all through the different stages of the policy cycle.

In September 2011, during the UN General Assembly, Member States at the United Nations High-level Meeting on Noncommunicable Diseases signed the UN Political Declaration, which states under paragraph 43 that Member States should promote the implementation of the WHO set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children and to discourage the marketing of foods that contribute to unhealthy diets.

Set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children

Marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children

Publications related to marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages to children

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