

# HEALTHY AGEING AND THE ROLE OF FOOD ENVIRONMENTS

Dr Stefanie Vandevijvere

# Obesity is an epidemic in Belgium

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## Costs of overweight and obesity to society

EUR 3.3 billion / year = direct costs

EUR 1.2 billion / year = indirect costs



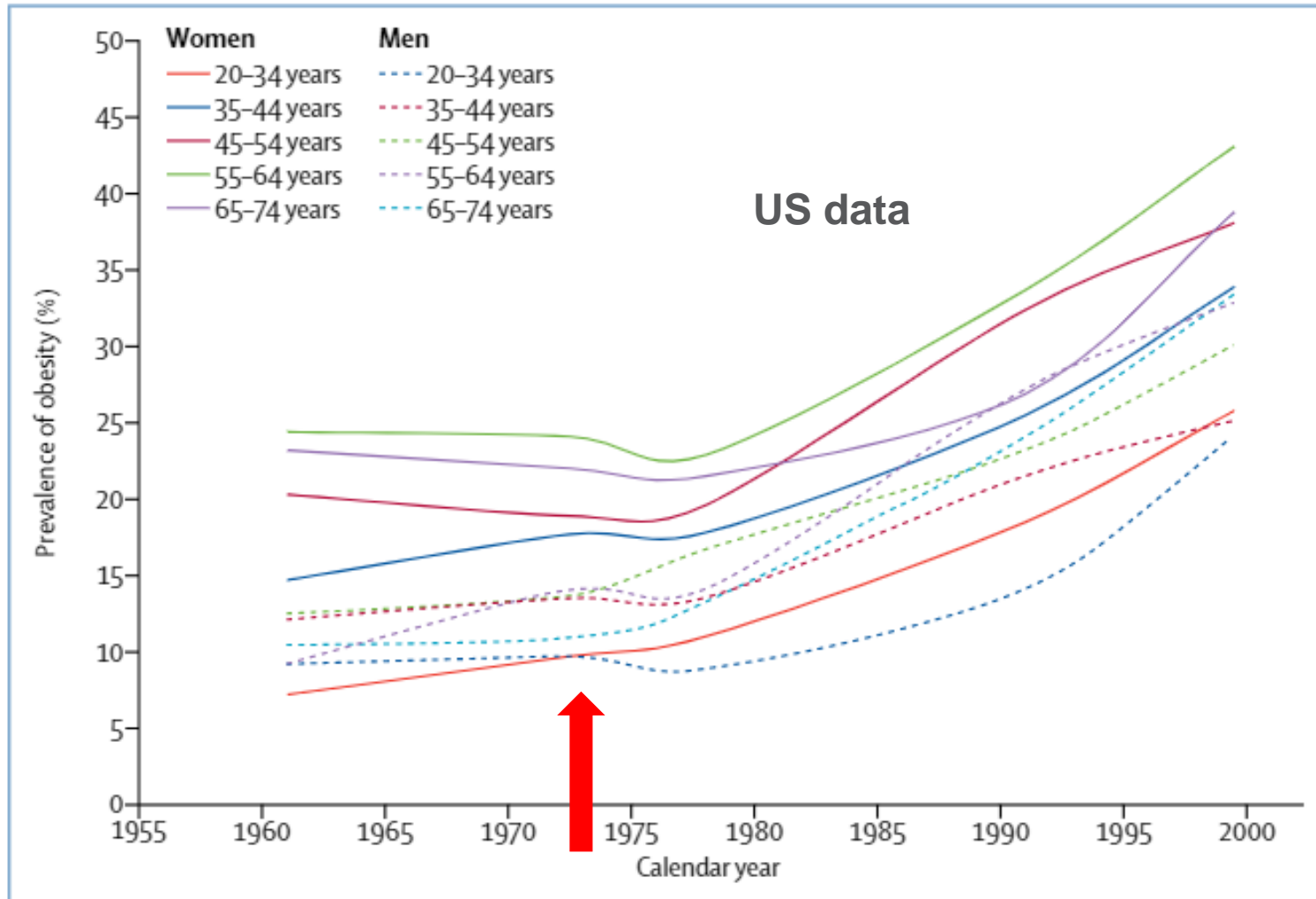
## Ultra-processed diets

1/3 of daily energy intake from **ultra-processed foods** in Belgium

*Highest intake by young children (3-9years)*

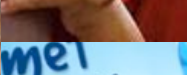


# Paradigm shift needed?



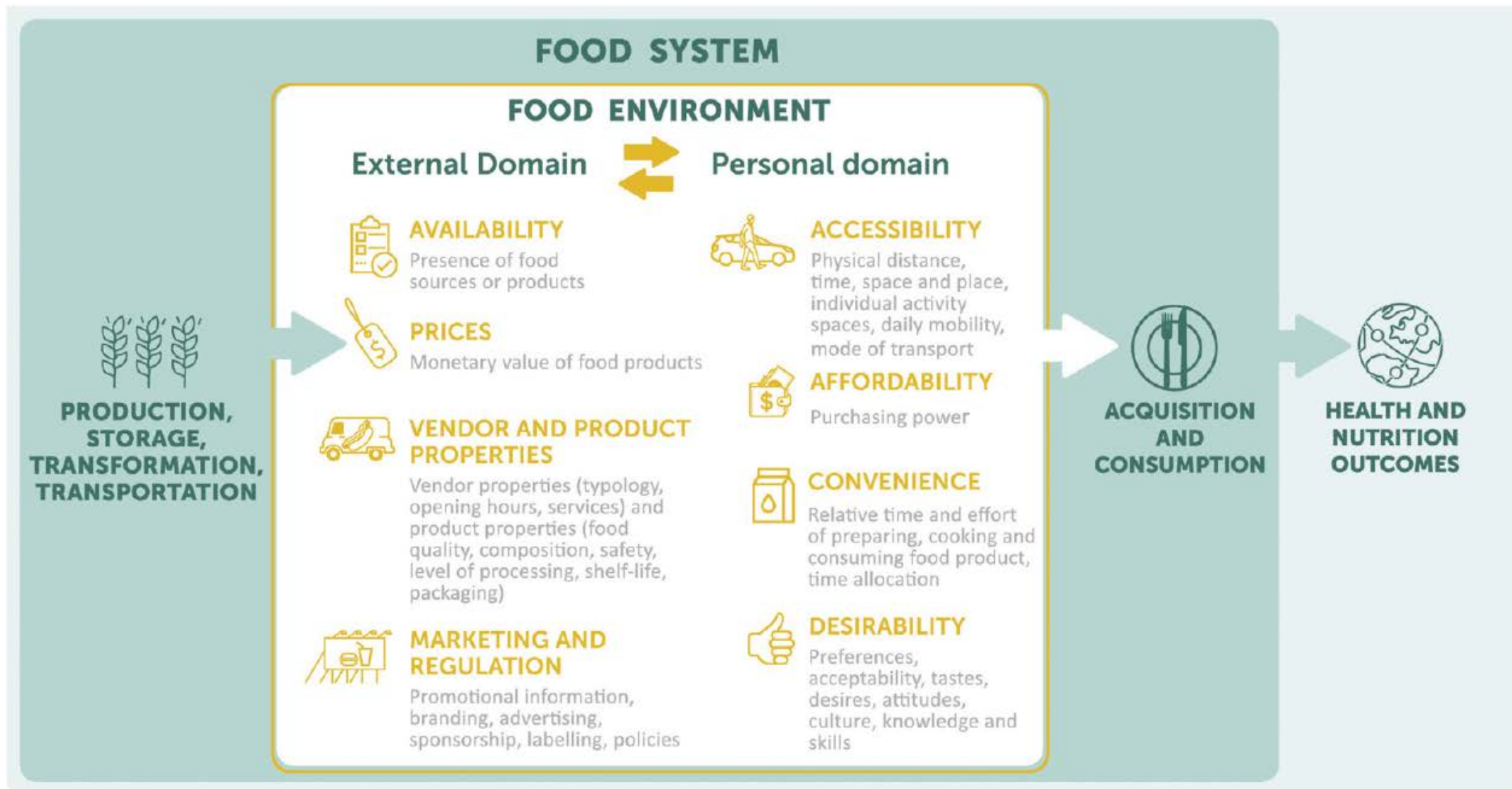
Personal → Corporate and Public Responsibility for Obesity?







# What are food environments?



# Availability of food sources/outlets in Flanders

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2008→2020

## Primary schools



Greengrocers: - 50%  
Bakeries: -23%  
Shops selling animal products: -30%

Fastfood outlets: + 17%  
Convenience stores: +15%

Fast food  
&  
Convenience

## Secondary schools



Greengrocers: -50%  
Bakeries: -31%  
Shops selling animal products: -43%

Fastfood outlets: +19%  
Convenience stores: +18%



Traditional  
stores



# Accessibility to food sources/outlets in Flanders

## Food deserts

➔ Unavailability of the most important foods needed for a healthy diet

Residential area without:

- Supermarket access within a 1000m
- Bus stop access within 500m

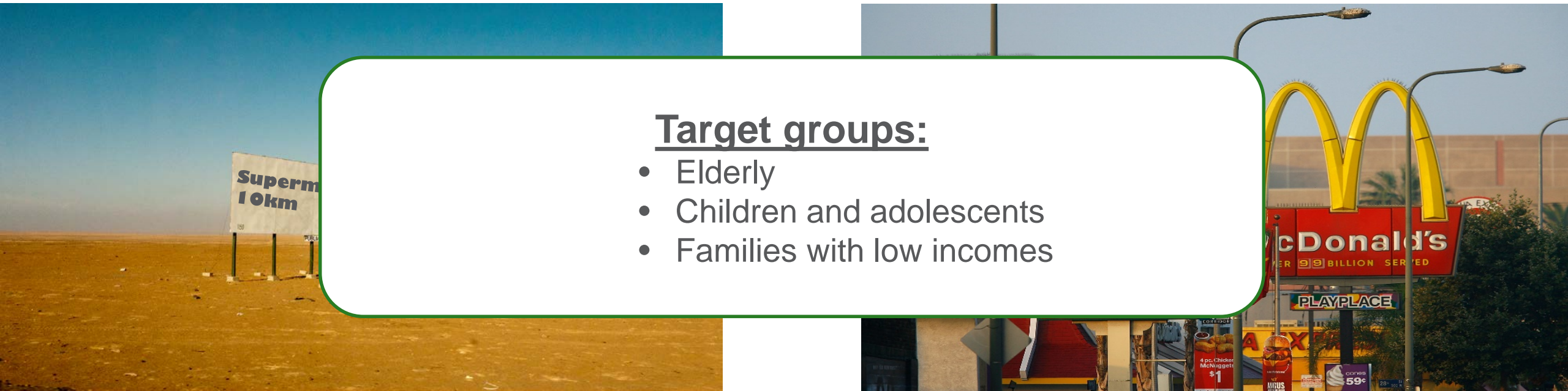
## Food swamps

➔ The temptation to buy unhealthy foods

$$\frac{\text{\# healthy retailers}}{\text{\#healthy retailers} + \text{\#unhealthy retailers}}$$

### Target groups:

- Elderly
- Children and adolescents
- Families with low incomes



# Accessibility to food sources/outlets in Flanders

- Increase in food deserts

Especially for the elderly population



## 2008

- 2,5% of residential area
- 2,2% of population

## 2020

- 3,1% of residential area
- 2,8% of population

- Abundance of food swamps



## 2008

- 71% of residential area
- 86% of population

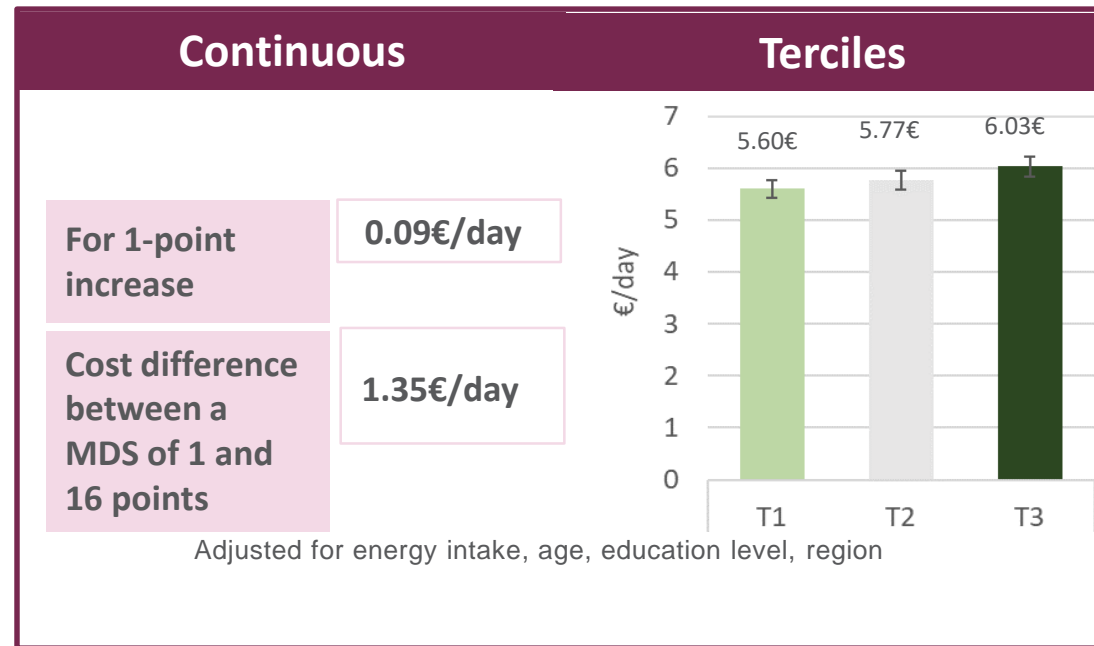
## 2020

- 74% of residential area
- 88% of population



# Cost and affordability of healthy diets in Belgium

## Mediterranean diet score (MDS)



- Diets meeting food-based dietary guidelines for **vegetables** were **20%** and for **fruits 10%** more expensive than diets not meeting those guidelines.
- Diets with a lower **share of ultra-processed foods** are significantly more expensive than diets with a higher share of ultra-processed foods.

# Business Impact Assessment on Obesity (BIA-Obesity)

## Nutritional quality/processing



Ultra-processed foods



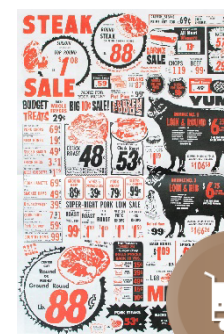
75%  
(2% - 100%)

29%  
(0% - 100%)

## Food and brand marketing



WHO EURO - 2015



81%  
(12% - 100%)

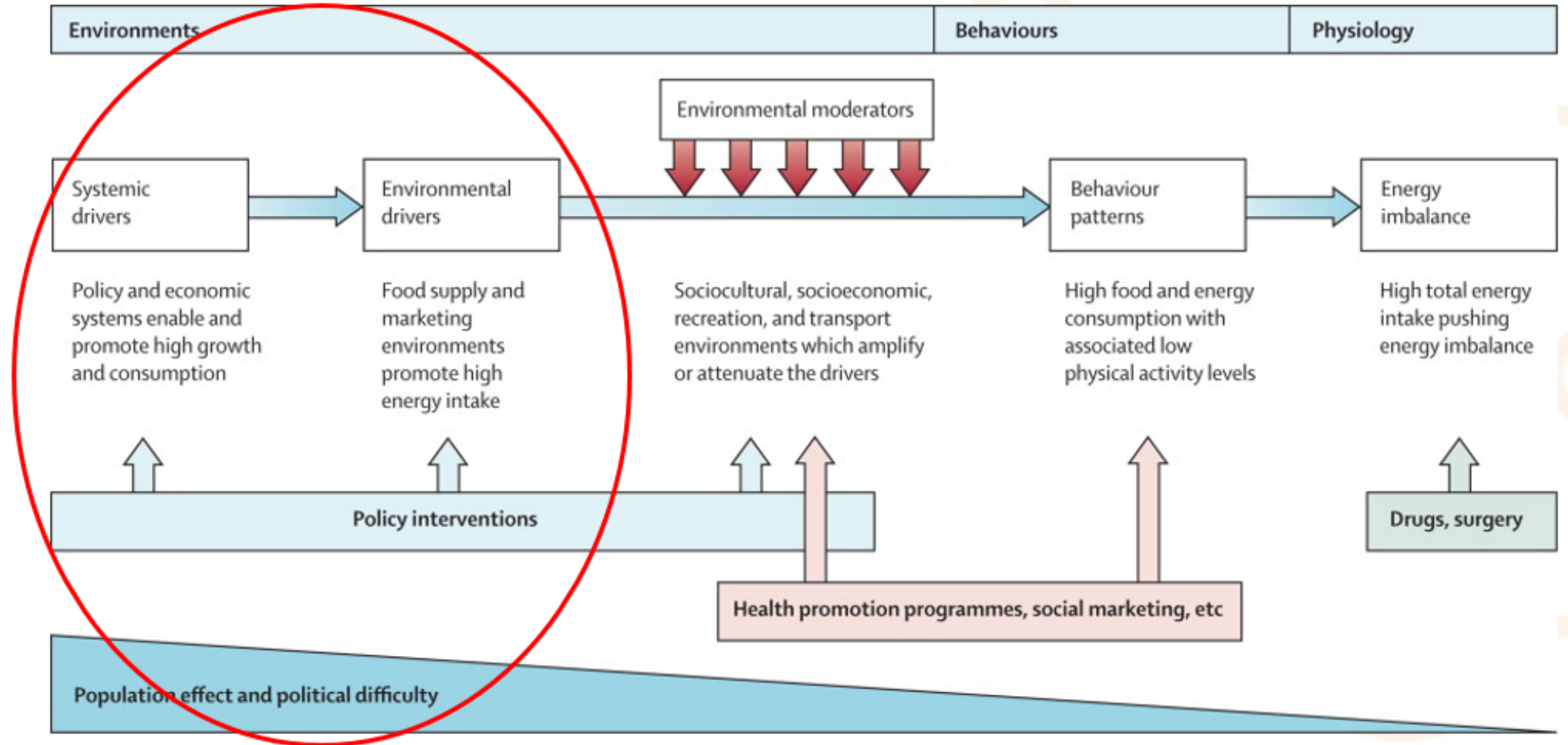


10%  
(4% - 18%)



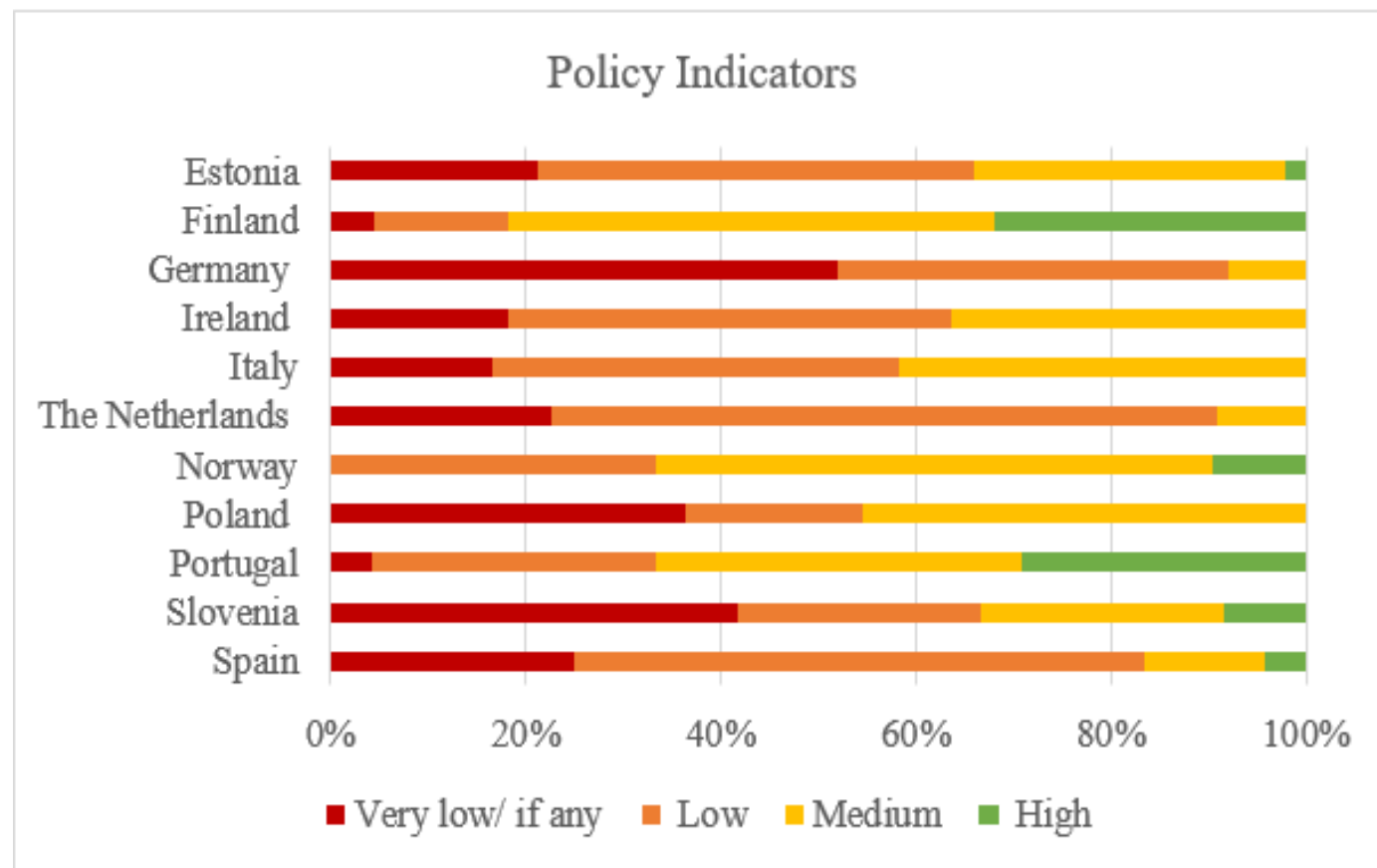
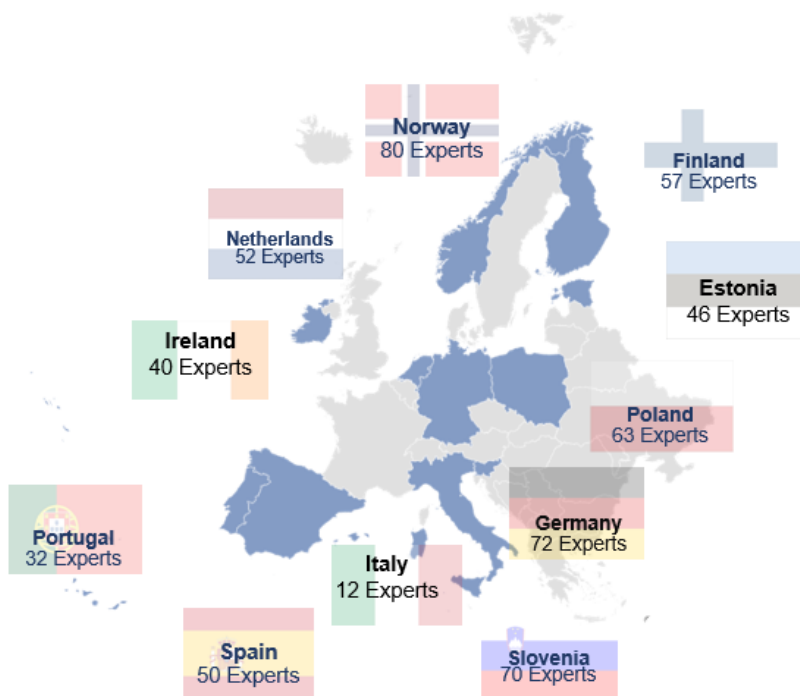
52%  
(43% - 62%)

# Governments as key actors to improve food environments





# Key policy priorities to improve food environments



## Top three priority policy recommendations across 11 EU countries:

1. Fiscal policies
2. Nutrition standards in schools
3. Comprehensive regulations of unhealthy food marketing to children

# Evaluation of policies, example Nutri-Score



Nutri-Score performed best for ranking products according to nutritional quality in a sample of Belgian consumers.

# Food systems policy index

			Primary outcomes					Secondary outcomes	
			Undernutrition	Nutrition/ healthy diets	Obesity/ NCDs	Environmental sustainability	Equity	Nutritional vulnerabilities	Women's empowerment
Food supply chains	Policy (sub)domains	Production	↑	↑	↔*	↑*	0	↑	↑*
		Storage, processing, packaging, distribution	↑	↑*	~	↑*	~	↑	0
		Loss and waste	0	0	0	↑*	0	0	0
		Trade and investment	↓*	~	↓*	0	↓*	~	↓*
Food environments		Composition	0	↑	↑*	0	↑*	↑*	0
		Labelling	0	↑	↑*	↑*	↓*	~	0
		Promotion	0	↑*	0	0	0	↔*	0
		Provision	↑*	↑	↑*	~	~	↑*	0
		Retail	↑*	↑	↑*	0	~	↑	0
		Prices	↑*	↑	~	0	↑*	↑	0

Positive



Neutral



Negative



Inconclusive



Data gap



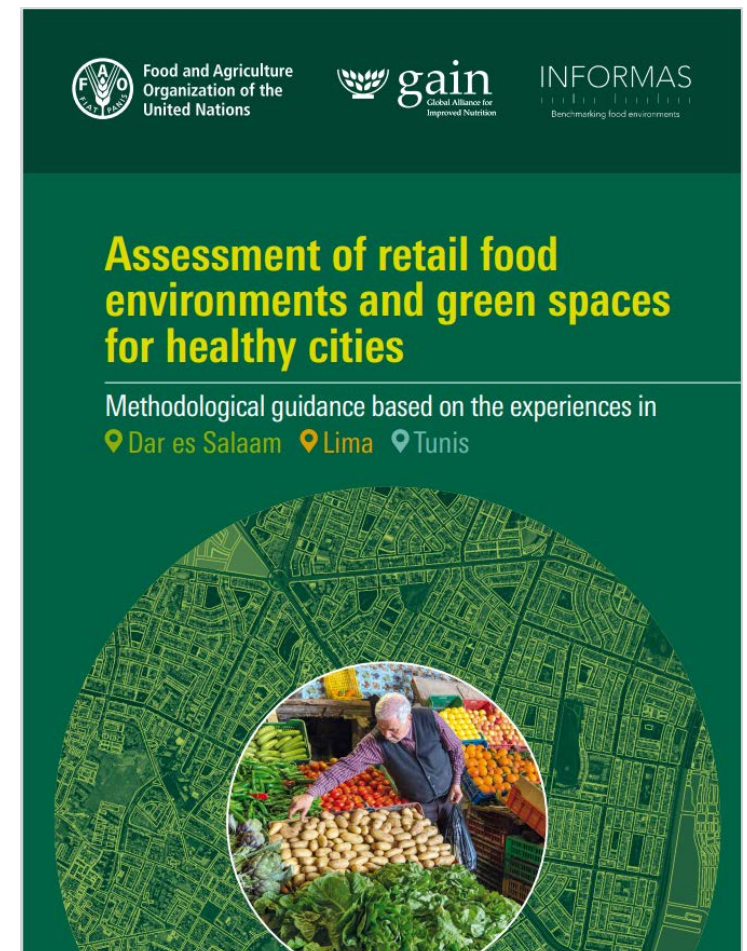
196 reviews



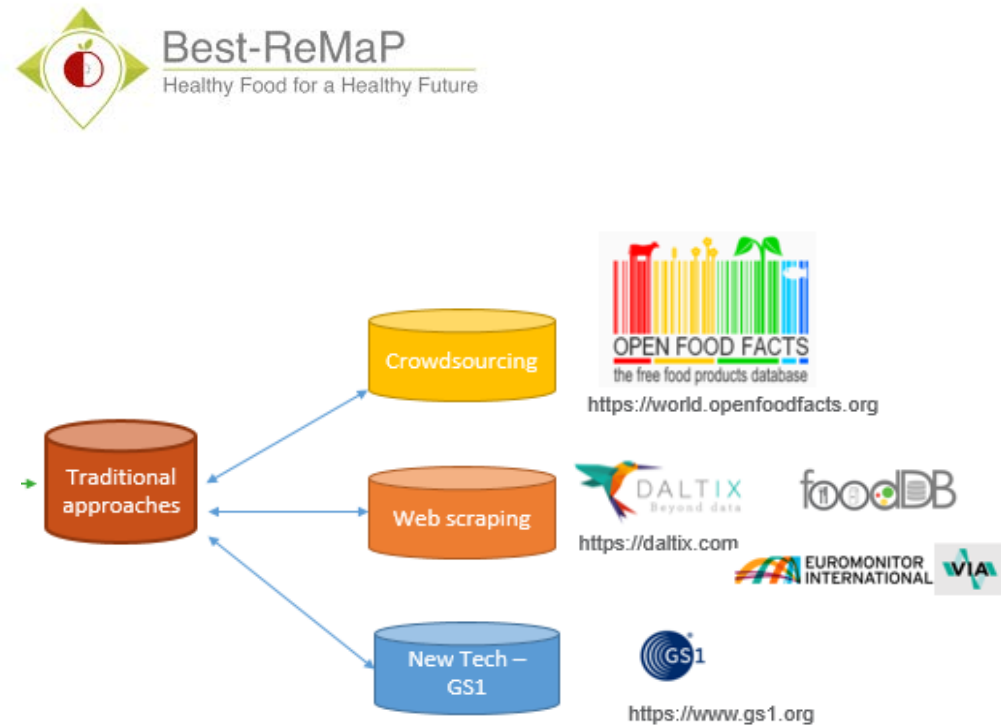
# Contributions at international level



## SUSTAINABLE HEALTHY DIETS GUIDING PRINCIPLES



# Contributions at European and national level



## Update of the Nutri-Score algorithm

Update report from the Scientific Committee of the Nutri-Score 2022

The update report from the Scientific Committee of the Nutri-Score was voted on June 29, 2022 and accepted unanimously by the members of the Scientific Committee.

**Superior Health Council**

**Towards a childhood free from unhealthy food marketing**

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Registrations

# Future directions

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- Monitoring comprehensively food environments at all levels of jurisdiction and prioritize key entry points for potential policy actions to create healthy food environments
- Supporting actors and holding them to account through monitoring the implementation of internationally recommended policies to create healthy food environments
- Stronger engagement with stakeholders:
  - Co-creative methods for working with communities & retailers
  - Food environments dashboard
  - Toolkits for cities and municipalities



# Thanks

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Sciensano colleagues who substantially contributed to this work



Dr Vincent Smets



Dr Iris Van Dam



Camille Pedroni



Celia Burgaz

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