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Title

Nutrient profile models, What we should know?

Abstract

Nutrient Profiling (NP) is a scientific method that evaluates the nutritional quality of foods and beverages, categorizing, classifying or ranking them according to their nutritional composition and salubrity, allowing ease of identification of foods and drinks that should or should not be encouraged in a healthy diet.

Over the last 25 years, governments, food manufacturers, public health authorities and other stakeholders have developed more than 100 different NP Systems that are used to inform a variety of policy, regulatory, and educational applications. This scene with different NP schemes is preventing effective application for the purpose for which it was thought, it is to say, to reduce the exposure of children to the food marketing, to establish clear nutritional labeling schemes, regulate the use of nutritional and health claims, and facilitate decisions to policy makers regarding the application of taxes to food and beverages. In the end, this scenario supposes a problem for consumers when it comes to making responsible decisions about their health.

Given that there are several examples of profiling models based on food categories with the same purpose, to be currently implemented by a wide range of stakeholders and taking advantage of society's awareness of their needs, the European Commission needs to produce a "Scientific Opinion to establish a Harmonized Profiling Scheme", which provides the basis to regulate the use of nutrition and health claims with labelling and marketing purpose, which will indirectly also facilitate food reformulation.

This harmonized PN Scheme could have some flexibility and provide the possibility of exceptions to give member states the opportunity to preserve country-specific factors related to their food consumption, health status or traditional food context.

Key references

- Rayner M. et al. Prevalence of Nutrition and Health-Related Claims on Pre-Packaged Foods: A Five-Country Study in Europe. *Nutrients*. 2016; 8, 137.

- Combet E. et al. Testing the Capacity of a Multi-Nutrient Profiling System to Guide Food and Beverage Reformulation: Results from Five National Food Composition Databases. *Nutrients*. 2017; 9, 406.
- European Commission. Institute for Health and Consumer Protection I.2 – Public Health Policy Support. Comparison of the Nutrient Profiling schemes of the EU Pledge and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. 2015

Key messages

- Establishing a harmonized Profiling Scheme will provide a triple win - for the consumers, for the industry and for public health.
- This triple win can be achieved if the whole food supply is covered under the chosen NP, if it helps establishing rules to health claims and turn it reliable and if it promotes continuous, step-by-step change, so it can be applied.

Questions

- How can we have a consensual European NP System that fits all the potential purposes?
- Is it possible to adapt a unique European NP System to the different contexts of each country or even each region?