Title: Nutrient Profiling to Support Healthy Diets: Policy Implementation in South-East Asia

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Abstract

Nutrient profiling is an essential tool for promoting healthier diets and supporting evidence-based public health nutrition policies across South-East Asia. The region is experiencing a rapid nutrition transition characterized by increased consumption of packaged, processed, and ready-to-eat foods high in salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats. At the same time, many countries continue to face undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, resulting in a persistent double burden of malnutrition alongside rising obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases.

This presentation highlights the role of nutrient profile models in objectively classifying foods according to their nutritional composition and in providing a scientific basis for public health interventions. Nutrient profiling underpins key policy actions, including front of pack labelling, restrictions on marketing of unhealthy foods to children, product reformulation, school food standards, and public food procurement policies.

WHO has developed and updated several regional nutrient profile models, including the South-East Asia Region Nutrient Profile Model (NPM 2026), which aims to improve transparency, usability, and applicability across multiple policy contexts. The updated model incorporates energy-based algorithms aligned with nutrient intake goals and has been validated against regional food databases and other international models.

The presentation also discusses ongoing challenges, such as inconsistent labelling practices, lack of harmonization across countries, industry influence, and the complexity of profiling out-of-home foods. Looking forward, strengthened governance, harmonized methodological principles, and consistent consumer messaging are critical to ensure nutrient profiling effectively supports healthier food environments and improved population diets.