

Overview of the 2nd edition of the WHO Global Sodium Benchmarks for Different Food Categories

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Sodium intake and disease burden

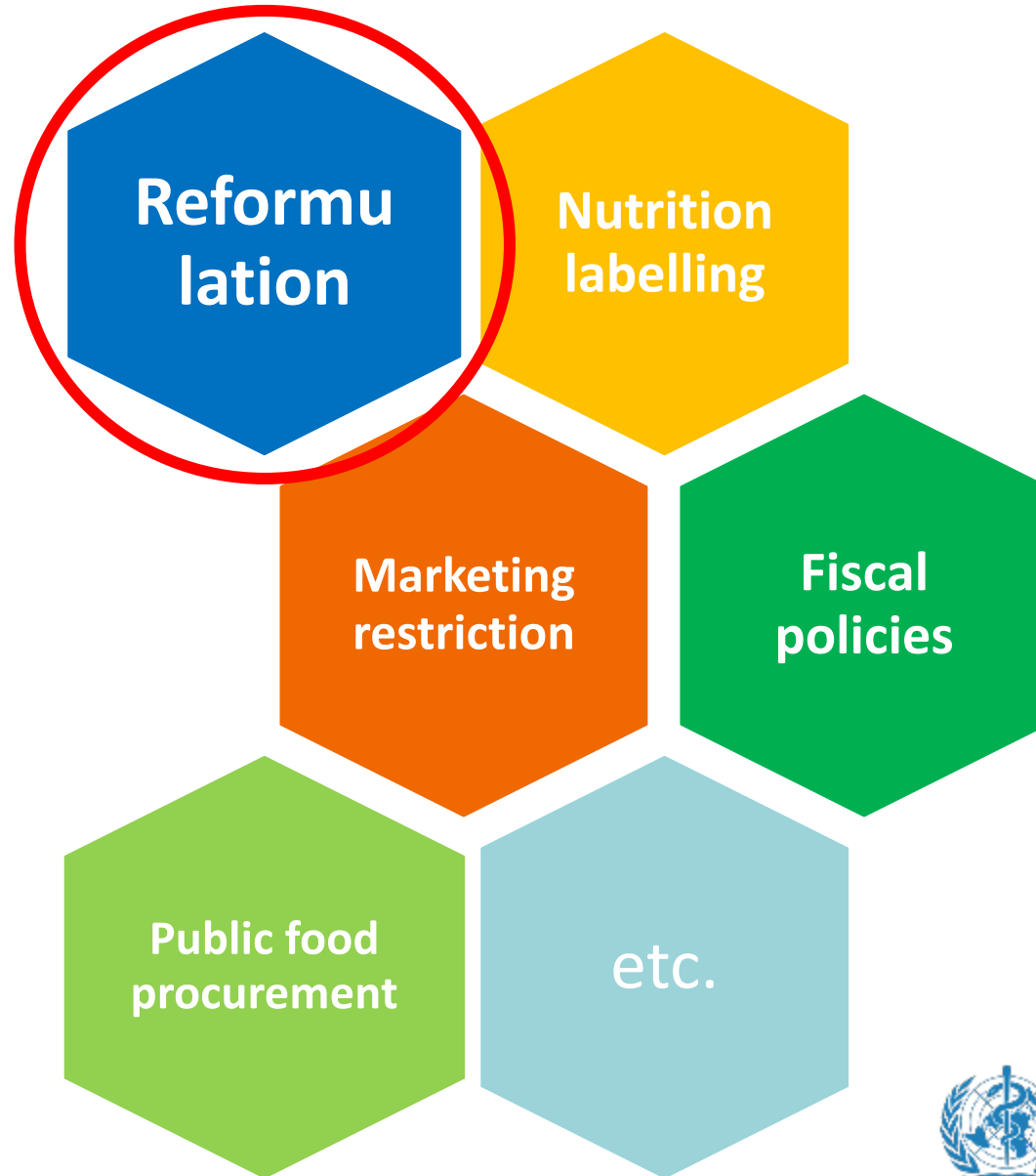
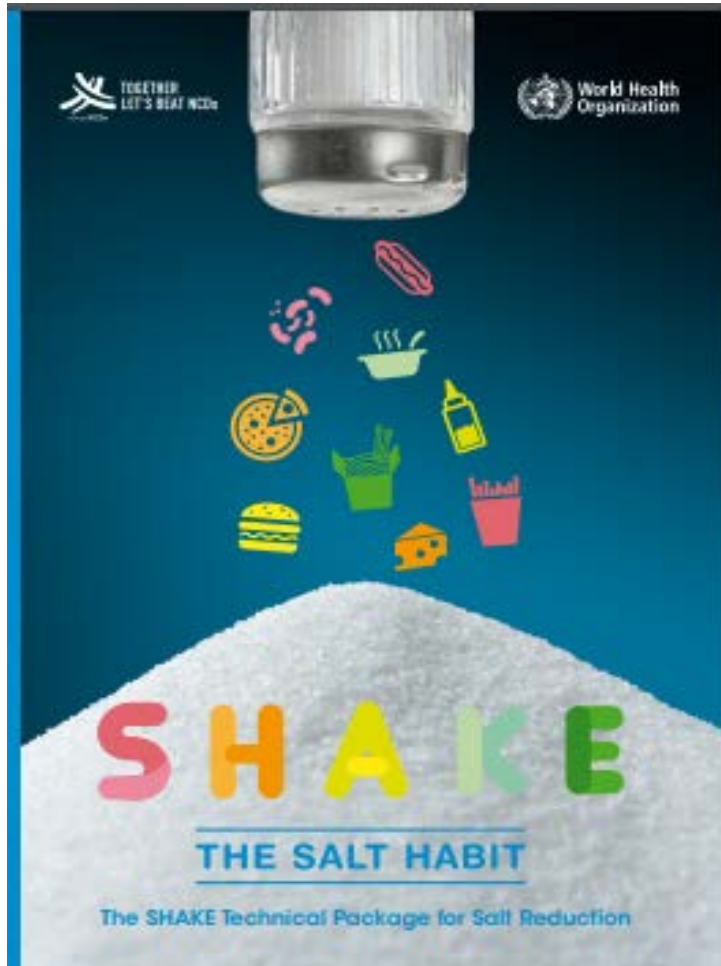


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- An estimated 8 million deaths globally are associated with poor diet, of which **2 million deaths are attributable to high sodium intakes.**
- **Reducing sodium intake** is an effective way to reduce NCDs such as cardiovascular disease by lowering blood pressure.
- **Member States** agreed to meet the 2025 global NCD target of a 30% relative reduction in mean population salt intake.
- **However, the mean global sodium intake remains high**, exceeding the WHO recommendation (below 2 g/day) by more than double.

Strategies for sodium reduction



National/ regional sodium targets



- About 50 countries already have sodium targets. A few WHO regions as well.
- Most of the national and regional targets are set in the form of maximum limit – the maximum sodium level that the product can contain.
- The number and type of food products covered by sodium targets **vary** by country and region.
 - *Common categories:* Bread, processed meat, savoury snacks, ready-made foods, sauces and dressings, cakes and pastries, cheese, etc.



Data were collected from countries/areas and regions with sodium targets

Countries and areas

- **WHO African Region:** South Africa;
- **WHO Region of the Americas:** Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Paraguay, the United States of America, and Uruguay;
- **WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region:** Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and United Arab Emirates;
- **WHO European Region:** Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal, Türkiye, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Uzbekistan;
- **WHO Western Pacific Region:** Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Malaysia, and New Zealand.

WHO regional/subregional offices

- Two WHO regional offices (*the Americas and South-East Asia*), and one subregional office (*the Pacific Islands*)

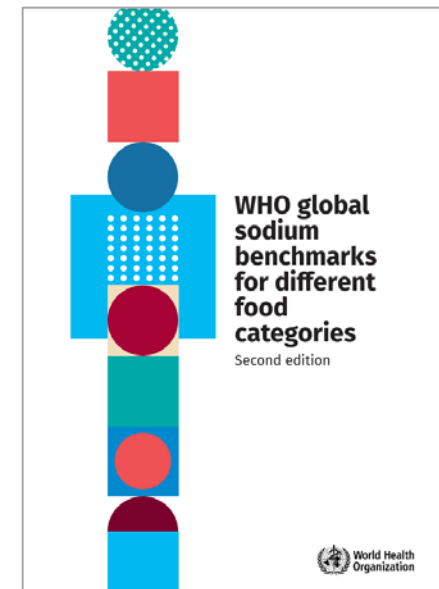
Establishing globally harmonized sodium targets

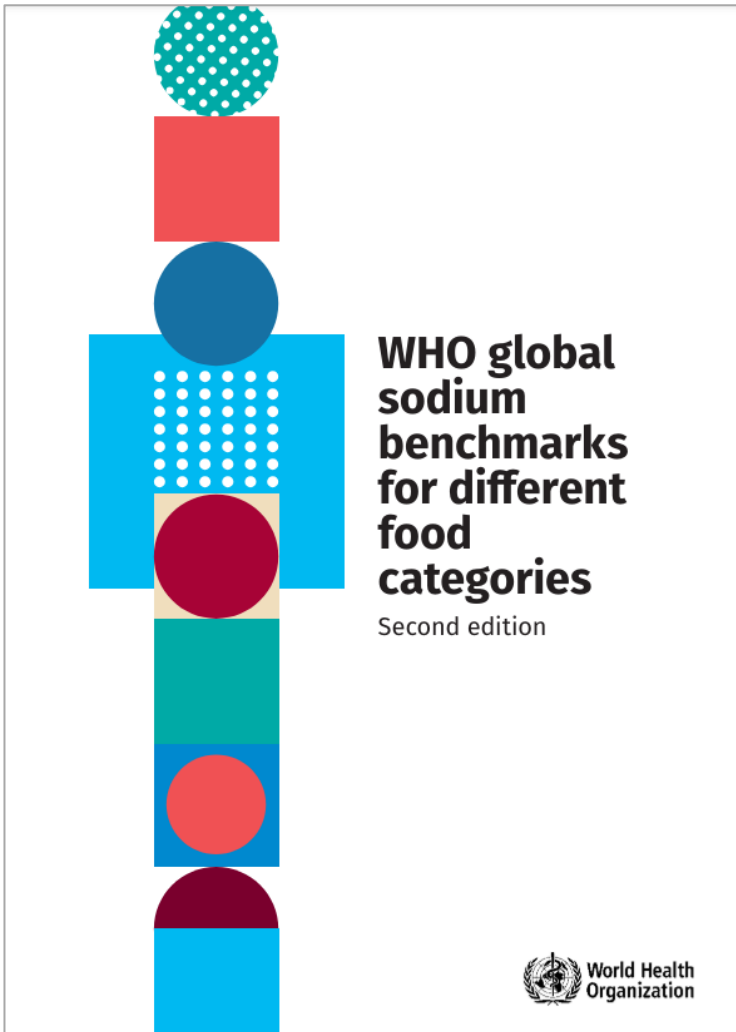
- Building on the work and experience of countries and regions
- With the aim of eliminating disparity in the sodium content of food products sold around the world



WHO global sodium benchmarks

- The **1st edition** in May 2021
- The **2nd edition** in April 2024





What are the WHO global sodium benchmarks?

- The maximum sodium level that a food product can contain
- Globally harmonized goal
- Guide for countries
- Basis for dialogue with industry
- Established for **70** food subcategories in the second edition (vs. 58 in the first edition)



← Download the 2nd global benchmark document

WHO global sodium benchmarks established for 70 food subcategories

Savoury snacks

Crackers, savoury biscuits

Nuts, seeds & kernels

Pretzels

Potato, vegetable and grain chips, popcorn, extruded snacks

Seafood or meat-based snacks, Seaweed-based snacks

Breakfast cereals

Granola and cereal type bars

Nut butters

Cookies, sweet biscuits, cakes, pies & pastries, pancakes, scones, dry-mixes

Processed fruit, vegetables and legumes (8 subcategories)

Bread and bread products
(3 subcategories)

Cheese
(10 subcategories)

Processed meat products
(7 subcategories)

Tofu and tempeh, meat analogues

Processed fish products
(3 subcategories)

Ready-made and convenience foods

Pizza, sandwiches and wraps

Pasta, noodles, and rice with sauce or seasoned

Canned foods

Soup

Ready-to-eat meals

Sauces, dips and dressings

Bouillon, soup stock

Cooking sauces, condiments

Spice blends, seasoning mixes

Dips, dipping sauces, emulsion-based sauces and dressings

Soy sauce, other Asian-style sauces

Butter, margarine, ghee, oil-based spreads

etc....

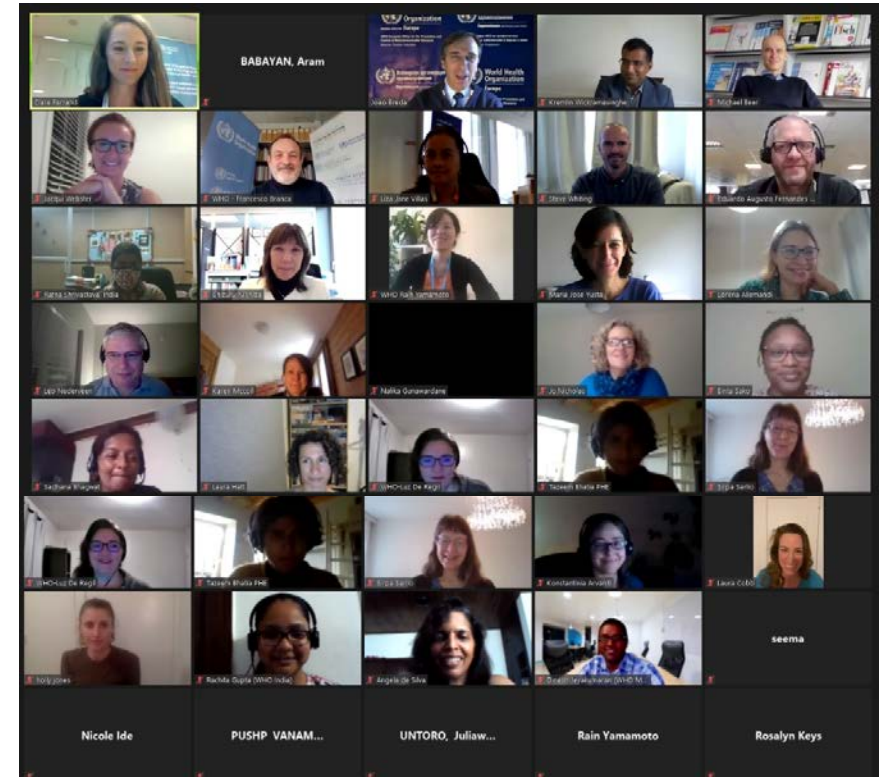
Process for setting the global sodium benchmarks

1st edition

- **Technical consultation**
 - 21-23 October 2020 (Zoom meeting)
- **Expert meetings and consultation**
 - 19-20 November 2020 (Zoom meeting)
 - 26 January 2021 (Zoom meeting)
 - February – March 2021 (Online platform)

2nd edition

- **Expert consultation**
 - April 2023 (email based)
 - December 2023 (email based)



Methodology for establishing the WHO global sodium benchmarks

- Data on sodium targets were collected and compiled from **about 50 countries, three WHO regional/subregional offices** which had developed sodium targets
- In principle, the lowest value for each subcategory from existing national or regional targets was chosen as a benchmark value.
 - In the absence of appropriate national/regional target, market data analysis was conducted (Second edition).
- Case-by-case review



Challenging and ambitious, and yet feasible



Example – Leavened bread

Categorized under

- 11. Bread and bread products
 - 11b. Leavened bread



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Main food category	Subcategory	Subcategory description	Global benchmark (mg / 100 g)	Lowest maximum limit on which the benchmark is based	Changes between the first edition and the second edition
11. Bread and bread products	11a. Sweet and raisin breads	All types of sweetened bread (e.g. brioche, sweet buns, and raisin breads/toast – i.e. breads with dried fruit and/or nut inclusions). Includes refrigerated and frozen dough.	330	United Kingdom: Morning goods – yeast raised, 330 mg	Main food category was modified Benchmark was updated
	11b. Leavened bread	All types of yeast-leavened breads, including sourdough breads. Includes breads made with all types of cereal flours (e.g. white or whole grain wheat, spelt and rye). Includes all types of shapes and baking traditions (e.g. pan baked, hearth baked, large loafs, baguettes, rolls and buns). Includes all types of artisanal, pre-packaged sliced breads, par-baked bread and rolls, croissants, bagels, English muffins, pizza crusts, and diet or low-calorie breads. Includes breads with and without additions (e.g. herbs, nuts, olives, onion, tomato, garlic, pieces of ham and cheese). Also includes refrigerated and frozen dough. Excludes dough for cookies (see 2a), cakes and sponges (see 2b), pies and pastries (see 2c) and scones and soda bread (see 2f). Excludes flatbreads that are leavened, such as naan (see 11c).	370	New Zealand: Leavened bread, 370 mg	Benchmark was updated Subcategory description was modified
	11c. Flatbreads	All types of leavened and non-leavened flat breads. Fresh baked, refrigerated and shelf-stable plain (i.e. flavoured only with salt) or flavoured tortillas, wraps, pita, Greek flatbreads or naan. Includes refrigerated and frozen dough. Excludes pancakes (see 2e). Excludes dry breads and crisp flatbreads (see 3a).	320 ¹	Qatar: Bread, 320 mg	Subcategory description was modified

What's new in the second edition?

1. Coverage of food products has increased

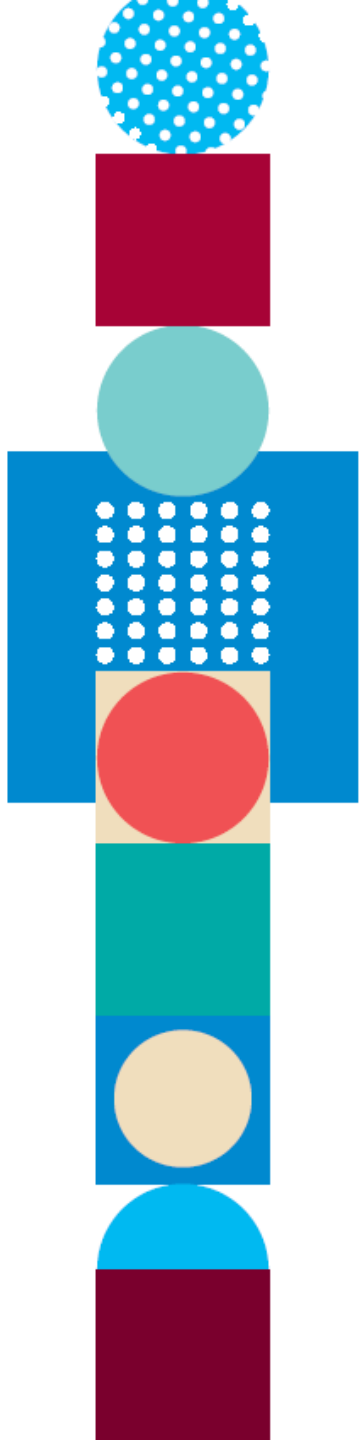
- The number of subcategories increased from 58 in 1st edition to **70** in 2nd edition.
- Benchmarks were set for five additional subcategories using market data analysis.

2. Global applicability has been enhanced

- **3 new subcategories were created** (e.g. seafood or meat-based snacks, seaweed-based snacks) – based on the regional targets recently set by WHO South-East Asia Regional Office.
- **Examples and descriptions** of foods were expanded for many subcategories.

3. Most current reformulation efforts in countries and regions are reflected

- Benchmark values were revised for 22 subcategories based on the **updated targets of 2 countries and one WHO region** (New Zealand, the United States, and the regional targets of the WHO Regional Office for the Americas).
- Updates were made to 5 subcategories based on **data from an additional nine countries** (Belarus, Croatia, Denmark, Kiribati, Latvia, Malaysia, Serbia, Slovakia, Uzbekistan).



WHO expectation

- We expect:
 - Countries to adopt and adapt the WHO global sodium benchmarks.
 - Industry to implement the WHO global sodium benchmarks.
 - Civil society and consumers to advocate and demand for lower sodium in food products.



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WHO Country office colleagues

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