

Nutrition policy status in Northern Ireland

NOURISHING policy index

This country snapshot presents detailed results of the **NOURISHING policy index** [1] for Northern Ireland. It highlights strengths and weaknesses in the design of national government nutrition policies. This snapshot supplements the policy index results with an in-depth look at the quality of policy design in each country. Full policy index results are outlined in the **NOURISHING** policy brief, which compares Northern Ireland to 29 other European countries.

Main messages

- 1 Northern Ireland implements national government policy actions in nine out of the ten policy areas of the **NOURISHING** framework. Three policy areas received a good assessment: limits or removal of specific nutrients in food products (I1), increasing awareness on food and nutrition through communication campaigns and social marketing based on food-based dietary guidelines (I2), and giving nutrition education and skills (G).
- 2 Within policy areas, weaknesses and gaps were identified, for example, in the design of fruit and vegetable initiatives in schools and lack of measures on food and drink available in the immediate vicinity of schools impacted otherwise well-designed standards on food in schools (O). Similarly, gaps were identified with regards to unhealthy food advertising for young people through product design and packaging, point of sale measures, and in/around schools (R). Finally, current policy actions at national level to ensure coherence between food systems and health (H) can be strengthened.
- 3 No action was taken at national government level in nutrition advice and counselling in health care settings (N2); therefore, this policy area should be prioritised. Greater attention should be given to setting rules and incentives to create a healthy retail and food service environment (S).

Overview of policy status

NO POLICIES IDENTIFIED

POOR

FAIR

MODERATE

GOOD

EXCELLENT

N	Nutrition label standards and regulations on the use of claims and implied claims on food	MODERATE
O	Offer healthy food and set standards in public institutions and other specific settings	MODERATE
U	Use economic tools to address food affordability and purchase incentives	MODERATE
R	Restrict food advertising and other forms of commercial promotion	FAIR
I	Improve nutritional quality of the whole food supply	GOOD
S	Set incentives and rules to create a healthy retail and food service environment	POOR
H	Harness supply chain and actions across sectors to ensure coherence with health	FAIR
I	Inform people about food and nutrition through public awareness	GOOD
N	Nutrition advice and counselling in healthcare settings	NO POLICIES IDENTIFIED
G	Give nutrition education and skills	GOOD

This snapshot is based on national level policies only, which include UK-wide and Northern Ireland-only policies issued by the UK government. Policies issued by provincial, regional or local governments are outside the scope of this project. Page 2 highlights which policy areas assess UK-wide or home nation policies.

Methods

The **NOURISHING** policy index methods are fully explained in the associated **policy brief**. In short, the policy index combines values for a) policy presence, and b) policy design for 41 benchmarks.

The benchmarks are applied to policies in the **NOURISHING database** [2], collected through a comprehensive scan in 30 European countries, including Northern Ireland.

FRAMEWORK: Set of comprehensive policy actions across **3 domains**:

FOOD ENVIRONMENTS

FOOD SYSTEM

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE COMMUNICATION

DATABASE:

Library of nutrition and diet-related policies

N O U R I S H I N G

POLICY INDEX: Compares country and policy area results generated by the benchmarking tool







BENCHMARKING TOOL:



















































Assesses the quality of policy design based on set criteria

Policy tools used to produce the policy index results

Breakdown of policy index results

(For full details on the policy design criteria, consult the [policy brief](#))

 No policy identified	 Meets up to 75% of policy design
 Meets up to 25% of policy design	 Meets up to 99% of policy design
 Meets up to 50% of policy design	 Meets all aspirational standards

	Nutrients on back of pack*			Planning restrictions regarding food service outlets around schools	
	Front of pack labels*			Planning restrictions on food service outlets	
	Warning labels			Initiatives to increase the availability of healthier food in stores and food service outlets	
	Rules on nutrient claims			Measures to support food producers to increase healthy food and decrease unhealthy food in the supply chain	
	Rules on health claims			Measures to support food manufacturers to increase healthy food and decrease unhealthy food in the supply chain	
	Food and drink available in schools, including restrictions on unhealthy foods			Measures to support food retailers to increase healthy food and decrease unhealthy food in the supply chain	
	Measures relating to sugar-sweetened beverage provision in schools			Governance structures for multi-sectoral/stakeholder engagement*	
	Fruit and vegetables initiatives in schools			Nutrition standards for public procurement	
	Food and drink available in immediate vicinity of schools			Supporting urban agriculture in health and planning policies	
	Unhealthy food in out-of-education locations			Community food production	
	Health-related food taxes or tariffs			Development and communication of food-based dietary guidelines	
	Income related subsidies or initiatives to increase affordability and accessibility of healthy food			Public awareness, mass media and informational campaigns and social marketing on healthy eating*	
	Targeted subsidies or initiatives to increase affordability and accessibility of healthy food				Nutrition advice and counselling in primary care
	Marketing to young people through advertising*		Nutrition advice and counselling in school healthcare setting		
	Direct marketing to young people*			Nutrition education in curricula	
	Marketing through sponsorship to young people			Training for educators	
	Marketing to young people through point of sale measures			Training for health professionals	
	Marketing to young people through product placement and branding*			Cooking skills	
	Marketing to young people through product design and packaging			Training in schools in growing food	
	Marketing in/or around schools		Training for caterers		
	Limit or removal of specific nutrients in food products*				

Note: The policy landscape in any country evolves over time. These findings reflect our knowledge as of May 2023. To see latest results and for further technical information on the policy indexes, please consult our website: wcrf.org/our-policy-work. For feedback or suggested updates, please email policy@wcrf.org. More info in the CO-CREATE project can be found at co-create.eu

[1] Policy index: wcrf.org/nutrition-policy-index [2] Policy database: policydatabase.wcrf.org