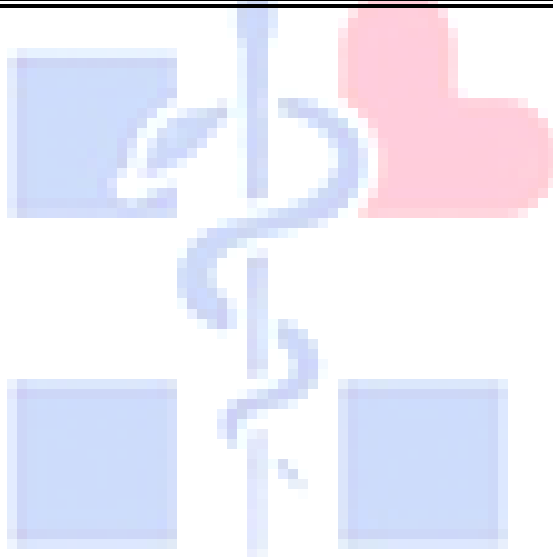


Greece's
National Action Plan on Food
Reformulation



Greek Ministry of Health
General Directorate of Public Health and Quality of Life
Directorate of Public Health
Department on NCDs and Nutrition

National Nutrition Policy Committee 2017



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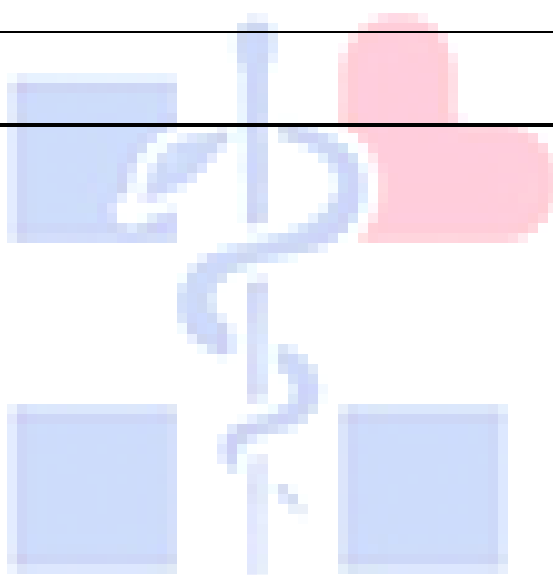
This Action Plan was drawn up by the “Working Group for the configuration of an Action Plan on Food Reformulation”, established by the General Secretary of Public Health of the Greek Ministry of Health. The members of the Working Group were representatives from the following bodies:

- *Harokopio University of Athens – Department of Nutrition and Dietetics*
- *National Center for Research and Technological Development*
- *National School of Public Health*
- *Ministry of Health – Directorate of Public Health*
- *Hellenic Food Authority*
- *General Secretariat for Research and Technology*
- *General Chemical State Laboratory*
- *Federation of Hellenic Food Industries*

The Action Plan on Food Reformulation was approved by the National Nutrition Policy Committee at 4th October 2017.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Reformulation of food products is the process of redefining the composition of food products in order to reduce their content in added sugars, saturated fatty acids, industrially produced trans fatty acids and/or salt, to lower the energy value and/or to increase the content of dietary fibers.

Food Reformulation is an objective of European health policies even from 2007, when the “White Paper on a Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues” was adopted. In 2010, European Commission adopted the “Council Conclusions on Action to reduce population salt intake for better health”. In 2011, EU Framework on National Initiatives on Selected Nutrients was developed, and two annexes were added some years later, the Annex for Saturated Fat in 2012 and the Annex for Added Sugars in 2015. The Framework sets actions and objectives for food reformulation, with emphasis on the relevant nutrients.

In 2016, Dutch Presidency of the Council of the European Union set Food Reformulation as a priority and organized a Conference on Food product Improvement, that resulted in the “Roadmap for Action on Food Product Improvement”. Based on this text, and following the relevant Informal Council of Health Ministers, the “Council Conclusions on Food Products Improvement” was adopted on 17 June 2016 by the Council of the European Union.

In the Conclusions, the Council calls the Member States to have a national plan for food product improvement in place by the end of 2017, either as a new plan or integrated into an existing plan, in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, to make the healthy choice easier for consumers by 2020, through an increased availability of food with lower levels of salt, saturated fats, added sugars, energy value and, where appropriate, through reduced portion sizes, as appropriate, and to provide information on the nutritional composition of processed foods. Local and traditional foods, including geographical indications, intrinsically tied to a country's culture and heritage could be subject to special consideration, taking into account the national situation as well as their contribution to the overall dietary intake. Member States are also called to make full use of all existing structures and tools, including the online tools of the EU Health Policy Platform, for sharing experiences on new initiatives and actions, as well as best practices, aimed at promoting food product improvement.

Member States should report regularly, at least every two years, on progress achieved in food product improvement initiatives, and share benchmarks, where available, best practices of implementation and results, within the framework of the High Level Group (HLG) on Nutrition and Physical Activity.

The final objective of food reformulation should not deviate from the requirements of food safety. Caution should be taken regarding:

- a) Limiting nutrients (as salt, saturated fatty acids, trans fatty acids, sugars). It should be done with caution and according to risk-benefit assessment principles.
- b) Microbiological safety of food
- c) Consumers' confusion about the consumption of these products.



B. CURRENT NATIONAL FOOD REFORMULATION ACTIONS

1. Salt Reduction Strategy 2016-2020 – Hellenic Food Authority

The Action Plan to reduce salt intake in Greece 2016-2020 is based on the following pillars:

- Assessment of total salt intake in the general population and major salt sources.
- Informing and awareness of the general population about salt reduction, with special focus on the most vulnerable social groups.
- Determining realistic goals for upper salt content levels in different food groups and redesigning food and meals with less salt.
- Monitoring and evaluation of actions

2. Food Legislation in school canteens

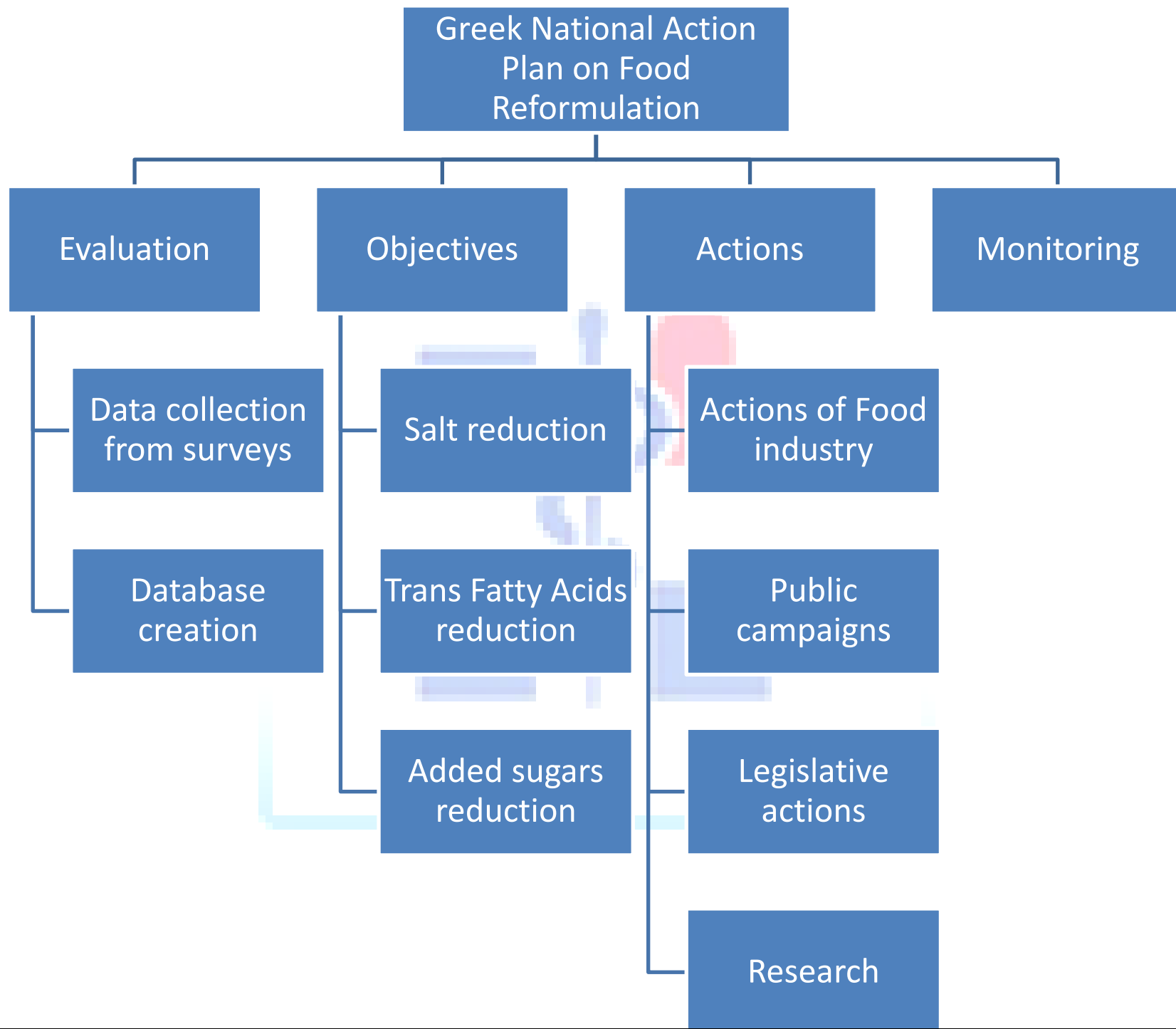
- Legislation on food sold in school canteens stipulates that certain products are allowed to be sold, while some of them also define nutrition labeling criteria (e.g. sugar, lipid etc.)

3. 90/2015 Decision of Supreme Chemical Council of the State

A series of articles and Decisions that were previously provide minimum content of artificial sweeteners of non-alcoholic beverages have been recalled.

4. 149/2012 Decision of Supreme Chemical Council of the State

«Approval of partially hydrogenated palm kernel olein». The use of olein fraction in food is limited by a trans fatty acid concentration of < 2%.



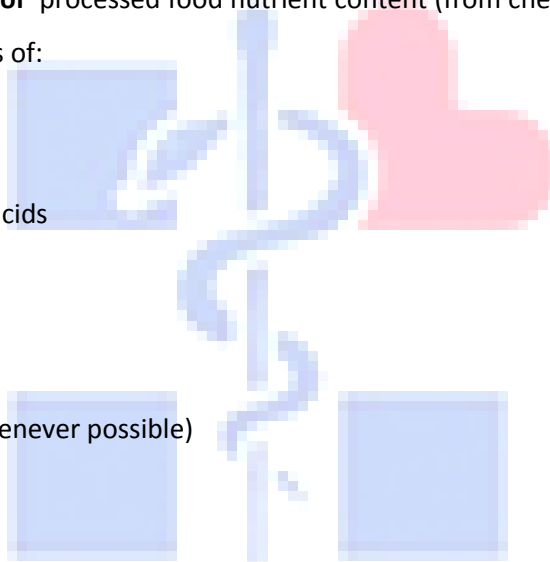
I. EVALUATION

1. Evaluation of current situation by retrieving data from research studies including :

- a. Energy and nutrient Daily Average Intakes of Greek population, with emphasis on total sugars, saturated fatty acids, industrially produced trans fatty acids and salt / sodium.
- b. Main uptake sources of the aforementioned nutrients by age group.
- c. Data on the average consumption of various food groups in the Greek population by age group.

2. Establish a database of processed food nutrient content (from chemical analysis and food labeling) that consists of:

- Total sugars
- Total lipids
- Saturated fatty acids
- Trans fatty acids
- Salt
- Energy
- Portion/size (whenever possible)



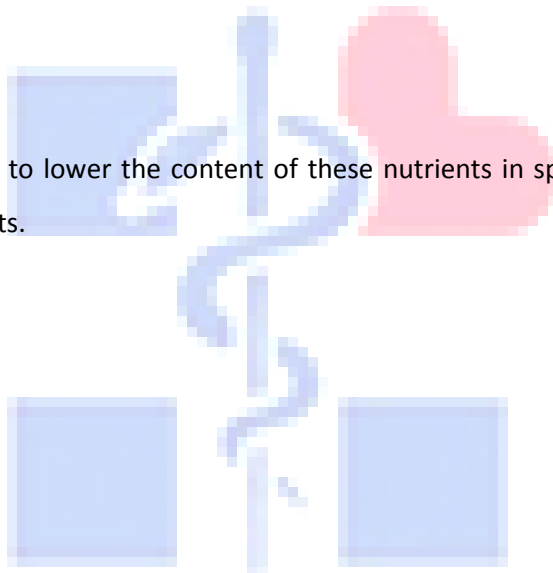
II. OBJECTIVES

Goal setting

Primary concern of the current Action Plan is to reduce the following nutrients of foods:

1. Salt
2. Industrially produced trans fatty acids
3. Added sugars

The first objective will be to lower the content of these nutrients in specific food categories, and then to set upper limits.



III. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Food reformulation actions

1. Actions from the part of food producers / food industry to:
 - (a) produce products with less salt, less added sugars, less industrially produced trans fatty acids, and/or
 - (b) lower consumption of products containing salt and additional sugars.Actions may include voluntary commitments, constrained promotional activities in products containing salt, added sugars and industrially produced trans fatty acids, smaller packages - portions of these products.
2. Support small-medium enterprises with the appropriate know-how for food reformulation.

B. Actions to inform general or specific populations (public campaigns)

Possible actions for consumers:

1. Publication of print and electronic brochures that explain and promote healthy food choices.
2. Publication of print and electronic brochures for better understanding of food labeling.
3. Collaboration with scientific and professional bodies for expanded public awareness.
4. Publication of Ministry's circular.
5. Promoting National Action Plan in scientific and public events.

C. Legislative Actions

1. Revision of nutritional standards for nurseries.
2. Definition of nutritional standards of foods distributed in schools (nutritional composition-portion size) by public and private bodies, including the European Fruit, Vegetables and Milk Scheme.
3. Definition of nutritional standards for foods provided through public contracts (hospitals, summer camps, etc.).
4. Definition of nutritional standards for foods allowed to be sold in canteens - children's camps.
5. Revision of *National Code for Foodstuffs and Beverages* on any specified minimum value of the aforesaid nutrients in foodstuffs.

D. Research Actions

1. Promotion of research aimed at recognizing and implementing methodologies for food reformulation, as well as the production of innovative foods that are low in fat, industrially produced trans fatty acids and added sugars.
2. Promote relevant consultation in Innovation Platforms and Research Programs.
3. Investigate the possibilities and conditions of implementing the results of Research in production line.



STAGE IV. MONITORING

Action Plan monitoring

Action Plan monitoring and evaluation results will be carried out by creating a food composition database. This database will be upgraded with data from:

- Food Analysis,
- Self-reported data from industry,
- Data from food labeling,
- Data collected from previous surveys,
- Statistics from other EU Member States or data available from the European Commission,
- Results from research activities.

In order to implement the Food Reformulation Action Plan, the Working Group will propose targeted actions that will be included in the Action Plan Annexes, which could be renewed on a regular basis in order to follow the latest scientific data.

The implementing bodies will also be clearly mentioned.

National Nutrition Policy Committee, in collaboration with the responsible authorities, coordinates the aforementioned Actions and collects data from their application.