

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FRESHFEL CALLS FOR FOCUSED EFFORTS ON FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PROMOTION IN THE PREVENTION OF NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Freshfel Europe welcomes the WHO Vienna Declaration on Nutrition and Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) in the Context of Health 2020, launched on 5 July 2013. The recognition of low intake of fruit and vegetables as the main food-related risk factor of developing NCDs, stresses the imperative need to focus efforts on promoting increased purchasing and consumption of fruits and vegetables.

The burden of diseases from inappropriate diets and physical inactivity in the WHO European region is exceptionally high. There is slow progress in reducing the premature mortality and disease burden in many countries in the region. The positive contribution of fruit and vegetables is underestimated in current policies.

In the [Vienna Declaration](#), Ministers of Health and representatives of Member States of the WHO, state that they will contribute significantly to the reduction of NCDs by addressing priority concerns, among which, low consumption of vegetables and fruits. The Vienna Declaration also points out the need to create healthy food and drink environments, and to consider the use of economic tools and incentives to promote healthy eating, according to national context.

[Philipp James](#) (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, IASO), highlighted the higher effectiveness of legislation, regulatory, and fiscal policies in achieving healthy food and drink environments than the classic health educational and media campaigning approaches.

[Carlos A. Monteiro](#) (Center for Epidemiological Studies on Health and Nutrition, School of Public Health, University of Sao Paulo) stated that, while there is an excessive consumption of ultra-processed products, nutrient dense minimally processed foods, notably whole grains, pulses and fruit and vegetables, are not contributing appropriately to prevention because of their low intake. Major political and policy efforts are focusing on the reduction of undesirable nutrients (salt, fat and sugar), mainly through reformulation. But, as Monteiro declared, reformulating products has a very limited effect, as reducing an ingredient(s) that are in the product, cannot transform these “ultra-processed products” into healthy ones. One needs whole nutrient dense unprocessed foods such as vegetables and fruit to accomplish appropriate prevention.

Philippe Binard, Freshfel General Delegate, stated “*While continued action to decrease the intake of certain nutrients is important, not enough efforts are being put in promoting the consumption of whole or minimally processed foods such as fruit and vegetables, rich in the nutrients that need to be encouraged.*” Freshfel calls policy makers to focus on this issue in future policy developments.

Note to the Editors: For more information, contact Philippe Binard (General Delegate) or Raquel Izquierdo de Santiago (Director Food Law, Nutrition & Health) at info@freshfel.org or visit the association website www.freshfel.org.

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