

# insight

## Overconsumption and Influences on Diet

### Overview

- + Overconsumption refers to a state in which food intake exceeds individual requirements, supplying an excess of nutrients and/or energy. Overconsumption commonly leads to overweight and obesity, with over one third of the global adult population – 1.9 billion people – now found to be either overweight or obese.
- + Malnutrition relates to both deficiencies and excesses in the dietary intake of energy and/or nutrients; therefore, overconsumption can result in a form of malnutrition.
- + Overconsumption has significant impacts on the global food system; increasing individual risk of certain non-communicable diseases and deteriorating public health; costing the world economy an estimated \$2 trillion per year; and fostering an unsustainable pressure on planetary resources and the global environment.
- + While food consumption is primarily required to meet biological needs, individual consumption patterns are also influenced by a complex range of cultural, social, economic and physical factors. These factors combine to form an individual's food environment. Certain environments predispose to overconsumption and poor diet, especially where access to convenience food is high.
- + In developed countries, food poverty is often the root cause of overconsumption, many of those with limited household food budgets basing their diets on relatively cheaper energy-dense convenience foods. Overconsumption is also a growing problem for the developing world, with economic growth stimulating a "nutrition transition" towards high-calorie and processed foods
- + There is a growing need for effective interventions to prevent overconsumption, given that its continued persistence is projected to have severe consequences over the coming decades. Research suggests that large-scale national and global consumption strategies may be the most effective approach, addressing a broad range of dietary influences to simultaneously tackle multiple aspects of the food environment.
- + Many isolated interventions targeting biological, economic, physical and social drivers of overconsumption are already active, providing exemplar initiatives that could be integrated into a wider consumption strategy.

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