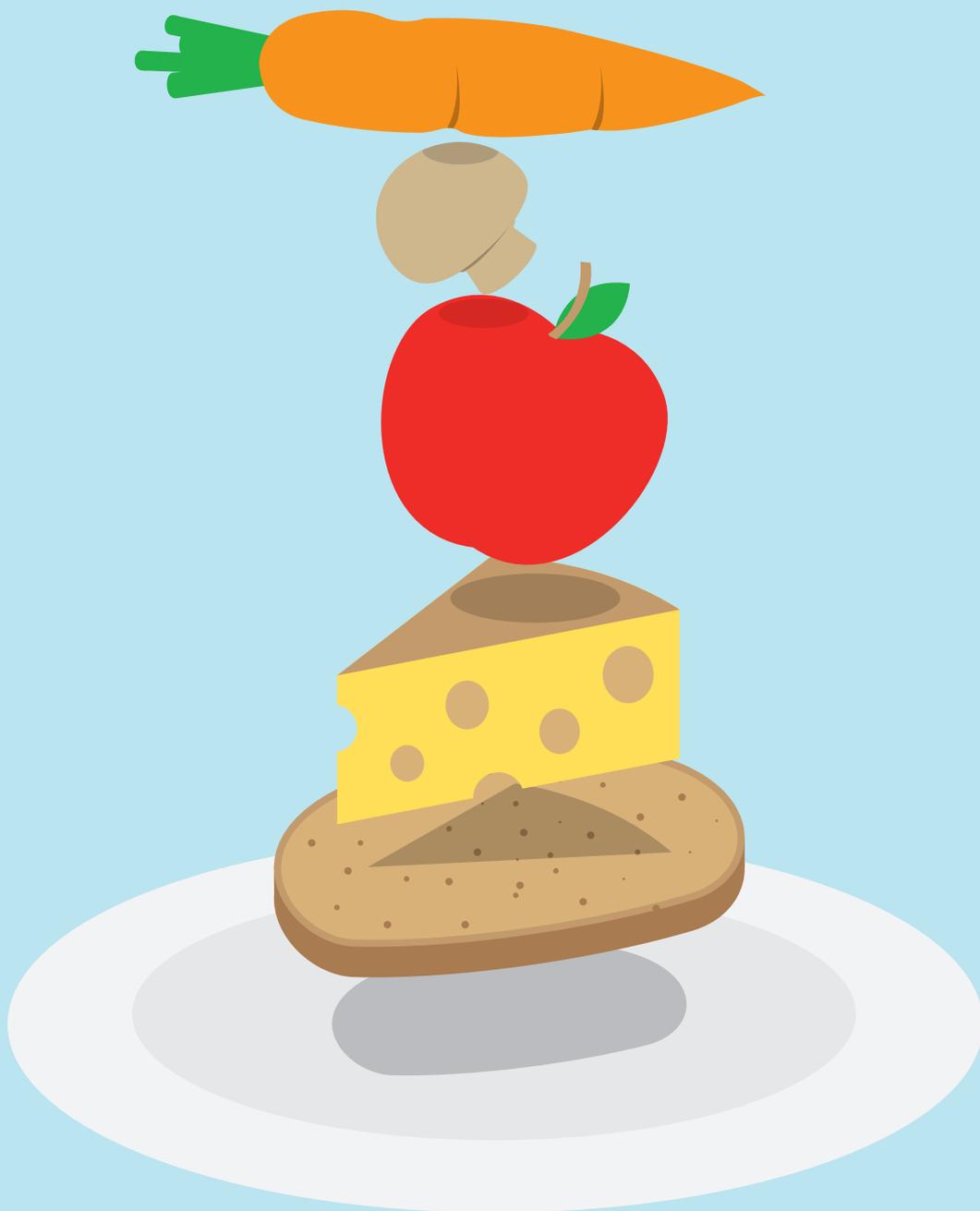


EATING WELL AND STAYING HEALTHY

SWISS NUTRITION POLICY 2017–2024

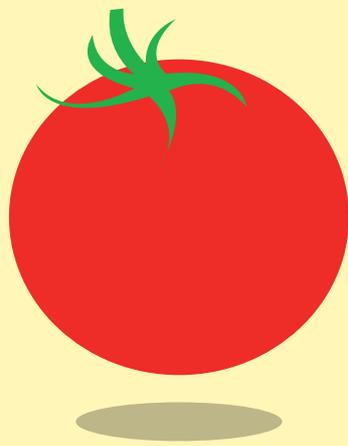


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Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA

**SWISS
NUTRITION POLICY
2017–2024**





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EATING SHOULD BE ENJOYABLE AND DO US GOOD

Today we can eat a more varied diet than ever before. We don't need to spend half our income on a little bit of bread, cheese and coffee like 100 years ago. And a vast wealth of food is available to us everywhere and at all times of the year – fruit from the other side of the world, vegetables from local farmers and ready meals from the freezer.

To a large extent, it is all these options that have changed our eating habits – we cook less for ourselves, and eat more often at work, school or on the move. Despite this variety, many people eat an unbalanced diet, containing too much salt, sugar and fat. And they are often unaware of this, particularly when eating convenience foods.

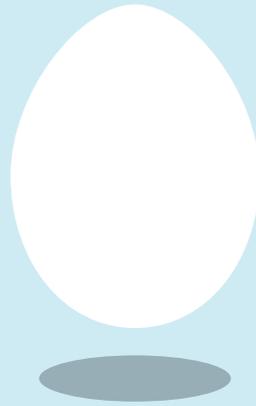
More and more people are therefore suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardio-vascular complaints. A balanced diet can boost our quality of life, prevent these diseases and reduce the cost of them.

The Swiss Nutrition Policy creates the conditions needed to make it easier for us to opt for a healthy lifestyle, irrespective of our age, origin or income. But to do this, we need sufficient knowledge of our diet, a good environment and the cooperation of all those concerned. And above all, we need to enjoy cooking and eating.

Alain Berset

Federal Councillor, Head of the Federal
Department of Home Affairs

INTRODUCTION



Health costs are rising in Switzerland. In 2013 they amounted to around 70 billion francs, while in 2017 it is expected that they will increase to 79 billion francs. 80% of these costs are caused by noncommunicable diseases NCDs. These include cancer, diabetes and cardio-vascular diseases, which often result in long and painful treatments for those affected.

Avoiding such diseases is therefore an important goal of the health policy. This policy is intended to motivate people to maintain a healthy lifestyle. In the long term, this should lead to considerable cost savings in the healthcare system.

For decades, one key aspect of health promotion has been nutrition. A healthy diet is a new and constantly changing challenge for every generation. Thanks to several decades of nutritional research, we now know a great deal about the harmful and also the health-promoting effects of our diet.

A quick look at history shows that, by 1900, a wide variety of food was available in sufficient quantities for everyone in industrialised countries in times of peace. Thanks to modern milling technology, for example, it was possible to manufacture white-flour products inexpensively. And the per-capita consumption of sugar, previously a luxury, increased ten-fold between 1850 and 1900. The negative impact of this excess on health had already been demonstrated even then.

The link between nutrition and health was polit-

ically established worldwide for the first time in 1992 at the World Health Organisation's International Conference on Nutrition. The basis for the Conference was the development of nutrition policies. WHO member states undertook to draw up and implement national policies to improve the nutritional situation and promote the health of their population.

Switzerland published its first WHO-based nutrition policy in 2001. With the continuation and updating of the Swiss Nutrition Policy, the Confederation regularly addresses current challenges. However, the policy's vision remains valid. When the policy is updated, changing social and scientific conditions are factored in. And the relevance of diet to noncommunicable diseases NCDs is borne in mind more closely from a health-policy point of view. With regard to measures intended to raise awareness and modify behaviour, changing consumption and information habits are specifically taken into account.

The vision, objectives and action areas of the Swiss Nutrition Policy 2017–2024 are intended to make an important contribution to the national policy for preventing noncommunicable diseases NCDs 2017–2024 (NCD Policy) within the context of Health 2020. An action plan will flesh out the implementation of the Swiss Nutrition Policy.

INTERNATIONAL NUTRITION POLICY



In European countries, health and well-being are threatened most by nutritional factors. This is the conclusion of a 2010 WHO study on the global burden of disease. Malnutrition, deficiencies in micro-nutrients, excess weight and obesity as well as noncommunicable diseases NCDs are the result of an unbalanced diet. The focus here is on insufficient consumption of fruit and vegetables, and the consumption of food that is too sweet, salty, fatty and energy-rich.

Both at a European and also an international level, important resolutions, strategies and declarations on promoting healthy nutrition have been made over the last 15 years.

The WHO developed a European Food and Nutrition Action Plan, which is based in particular on the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of noncommunicable diseases NCDs (2013–2020). The updating and implementation of the Swiss Nutrition Policy are also guided by the European Union's Action Plan on Childhood Obesity.

HEALTH POLICY IN SWITZERLAND



For the Federal Council, preventing noncommunicable diseases NCDs is a priority. It therefore decided to step up health promotion and disease prevention with its "Health 2020" strategy. It also declared the NCD strategy agreed in April 2016 to be one of five priorities for Health 2020, and defined it as the key goal for the 2016–2019 legislative period.

This goal is based on the conviction that how long we live and remain free from noncommunicable diseases NCDs depends largely on our lifestyle. People who exercise regularly, do not smoke, do not drink alcohol to excess and follow a balanced diet have a better chance of remaining healthy in the long term.

This is also the starting point of the Swiss Nutrition Policy 2017–2024. The Federal Department of Home Affairs aims to make it easier to choose a healthy and varied diet and promote a balanced diet to prevent noncommunicable diseases NCDs.

The nutrition policy is targeted at everyone in the spheres of business and politics, representatives of the food and health sectors and at organisations

that contribute towards promoting healthy eating. This includes members of parliament, cantonal authorities, consumer protection organisations, the food industry, the catering industry and representatives of medical and nutritional societies, disease prevention and health promotion, and also research institutions.

Taking into account all relevant areas of policy, such as education, labour, social, consumer protection, business and agriculture as well as science and research, desirable measures will be discussed and developed within the framework of the policy. The intention is to contribute towards promoting the well-being and health of the population in Switzerland.

These measures should be effective, appropriate and cost-efficient, and should be implemented with the voluntary cooperation of the business sector. They should also boost the general public's nutritional literacy. With this approach, everyone will be able to take responsibility for making informed food choices.

CURRENT NUTRITIONAL SITUATION

Over the last 150 years, Switzerland has made considerable headway when it comes to nutrition. For example, virtually no-one goes hungry any more, food is safer and keeps for longer than previously, and we have more than we need of a wide variety of foodstuffs. This wide selection of food gives people great enjoyment when they prepare it and eat it.

But current eating habits are also contributing to the fact that a growing proportion of the population are overweight or obese. The reasons for this can be seen in the first "menuCH" National Nutrition Survey (2014/15). This shows what and how much people in Switzerland eat on average per person per day. It also underlines where the challenges lie for the present nutrition policy period.

The Swiss Food Pyramid, which is published by the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO) and the Swiss Society for Nutrition (SGE), illustrates a balanced, healthy diet. There is a place for all types of food in our diet, and the pyramid also leaves sufficient room for our personal preferences. Foods at the lower levels of the pyramid should be eaten in larger quantities, those at the higher levels in moderation. It's all a question of quantity. The findings of menuCH indicate that the pyramid still needs some shaping up.



SWEET AND SALTY FOODS, ALCOHOL: EACH DAY WE CONSUME 4 PORTIONS INSTEAD OF 1 PORTION

Actual consumption: People in Switzerland eat too much sweet and salty food – an average of 1.6 portions per day. They also drink 2.4 sweetened or alcoholic beverages per day.

Recommended consumption: Enjoy sweet and salty foods and alcohol in small quantities only, either 1 portion of sweet food or 1 portion of salty food or 1 alcoholic drink per day.

FATS AND OILS: WE CONSUME TOO MUCH ANIMAL FAT

Actual consumption: Our consumption of butter, margarine, cream and fatty sauces is four times the recommended daily quantity, whereas we are not meeting the recommended quantities for vegetable oil, nuts, seeds, kernels and olives.

Recommended consumption: It is recommended that we eat 2–3 tablespoonfuls of vegetable oil, of which at least half should be rapeseed oil, plus 1 portion (20–30 g) of unsalted nuts, seeds or kernels per day. Additionally, we may use butter, margarine, cream, etc. sparingly (approx. 1 tablespoonful or 10 g per day).

DAIRY PRODUCTS: WE EAT 2 PORTIONS INSTEAD OF 3; MEAT: WE EAT THREE TIMES TOO MUCH

Actual consumption: The Swiss population consumes an average of 220 g milk and dairy products such as cheese and yoghurt per person per day, which equates to 2 portions. They eat 150 g of other protein-based food such as meat, fish and tofu per day, of which 110 g comes from meat and meat products alone.

Recommended consumption: 3 portions of milk and dairy products per day (1 portion = 200 ml milk or 150–200 g dairy products or 30–60 g cheese). Plus alternately 1 portion (100–120 g) meat, poultry, fish, tofu, quorn or seitan, 2–3 eggs, 30–60 g cheese or 150–200 g quark/cottage cheese.

CEREAL PRODUCTS, POTATOES AND PULSES: EACH DAY WE EAT 2.4 PORTIONS INSTEAD OF 3 PORTIONS

Actual consumption: We consume an average of just under 300 g or 2.4 portions of starchy food per day, with bread accounting for the largest share of this, at 120 g.

Recommended consumption: 3 portions per day, 1 portion equates to: 75–125 g bread/pastry or 60–100 g pulses (dry weight) or 180–300 g potatoes or 45–75 g crispbread/whole-grain crackers/cereal flakes/flour/pasta/rice/maize/other cereal grain (dry weight).

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES: WE DON'T EAT ENOUGH

Actual consumption: 87% of the Swiss population do not follow the recommendation to consume 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day. They consume an average of 3.6 portions per day. The consumption of fruit and vegetables is about equal, at 1.9 and 1.7 portions per day respectively.

Recommended consumption: 5 portions per day of different colours, made up of 3 portions of vegetables and 2 portions of fruit. 1 portion equates to 120 g. One portion each day may be replaced by 200 ml of vegetable or fruit juice (with no added sugar).

BEVERAGES: CONSUMPTION MATCHES RECOMMENDATIONS

Actual consumption: With consumption lying at 1.7 litres of water, tea and coffee and around 0.5 litres of coffee mix drinks and soup per day, the recommendations on fluid intake are being well met.

Recommended consumption: 1–2 litres per day, preferably in the form of unsweetened drinks such as tap water / mineral water or fruit / herb tea. Caffeinated drinks such as coffee, black tea and green tea can also count towards our fluid intake.

CHALLENGES

International studies show that seven out of the fifteen main factors for sickness and mortality are associated with diet and lifestyle. Body weight is a key indicator for certain risks relating to noncommunicable diseases NCDs. In Switzerland, almost half of the population is either overweight or obese. Nutrition therefore plays a central role in the health of the population.

At the same time, the current nutritional situation illustrates how significantly our theoretical knowledge and our actual behaviour diverge from each other.

Based on these findings, three challenges can be extrapolated, which are being included as objectives for the nutrition policy:

- 1. Strengthen nutritional literacy**
- 2. Improve the framework conditions**
- 3. Involve the food industry**

1. Strengthen nutritional literacy – put knowledge into practice in everyday life.

Swiss health surveys (SGB) conducted from 1992 to 2012 by the Federal Statistical Office indicate that 70 percent of the population pays attention to what they eat. However, the menuCH findings (2014/15) show that many people do not follow or are not even aware of the recommendations. Dietary information must be easily accessible, clearly understandable for everyone, and possible to implement in everyday life.

2. Improve the framework conditions – make healthy choices easier.

Eating habits can only be improved if the contextual conditions are improved. The proportion of processed products on the market has increased over recent decades. Many of the foods on the menu contain too much sugar, salt or fat. Reducing the salt and sugar content, and optimising the quality of the fat in foods will create a selection of products that facilitate healthy choices.

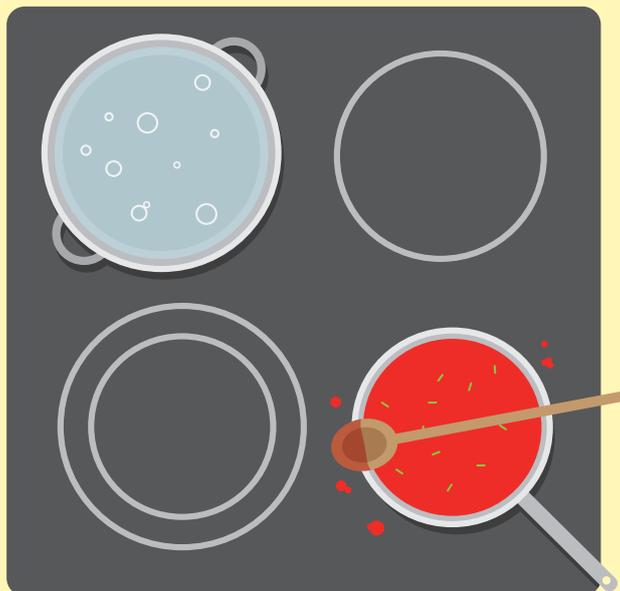
3. Involve the food industry – encourage manufacturers and suppliers to make a contribution.

Some manufacturers and suppliers of food and meals are already making a voluntary contribution towards a balanced diet. Healthy eating choices will become easier if recipes are modified. However, they are also strongly influenced by advertising. Children and young people are particularly susceptible to this type of advertising. The desire of those involved in health promotion to see restrictions in child-targeted advertising for products that are too sweet, fatty or salty must be taken into account better. A dialogue with industry should therefore be encouraged.

VISION

Everyone living in Switzerland is able to choose a balanced and varied diet. They possess the skills to do so and have the necessary environment they need in order to autonomously maintain a healthy lifestyle irrespective of their origin, socio-economic status and age.

AREAS FOR ACTION



To achieve the objectives of the Swiss Nutrition Policy, we need to provide the population with targeted information and strengthen their nutritional literacy. Basic conditions such as food composition, community catering meal times, etc. must also be shaped so as to permit healthy but also enjoyable eating. The following guiding principles are being set:

Promoting the “life phase” approach: People have differing nutritional requirements depending on their life phase. Special attention should be paid to babies, infants, children and adolescents, women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, and older people.

Improving equal opportunities: People with low incomes, lower educational qualifications or with a migration background face increased health risks. They have specific needs and concerns that should, as far as possible, be taken into account by partners.

Reinforcing multi-sectoral cooperation: Healthy eating habits are influenced by a variety of factors, with health policy not being solely responsible. Other areas of policy such as agriculture, business and education can also influence people’s eating habits to a great extent via suitable measures.

Like the NCD strategy, four action areas have been defined: Information and education, framework conditions, coordination and cooperation, and monitoring and research.



1. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

You can only take responsibility for yourself and your fellow human beings and make healthy eating choices if you are well informed and understand the link between nutrition and health. So education, awareness-raising and information play a key role. It is important here that the information is worded in a way that is generally understandable. It should also take account of the everyday lives of the various target groups and be feasible to put into practice.

Today's nutritional messages, some of which are contradictory, can make people feel uncertain. Close cooperation and coordination between the Confederation and other stakeholders are therefore needed.

The priorities:

- The standardised publication of easy-to-follow nutritional information for the general population and for particular target groups in various different life phases;
- Assistance in choosing food products by promoting the clarity of food labelling.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

The booklet "Diet and nutrition during pregnancy and while breastfeeding" explains how the recommendations for a healthy, balanced diet can be put into practice. It provides information on nutrients that are particularly important during pregnancy and while breastfeeding, and on when it makes sense or is necessary to take nutritional supplements. To reach as many people as possible, short versions of the booklet have been prepared in various languages.

The salt flyer "Versalzen Sie sich Ihre Gesundheit nicht" (Don't oversalt your health) informs the general public of the health implications of consuming too much salt. Simple tips make it easy to eat healthily and well.



2. FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

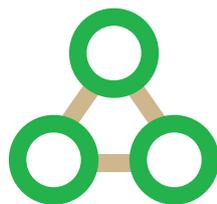
Eating habits are strongly influenced by environmental parameters. Factors such as food composition, the variety of foods available, advertising targeted at children and the meals available in staff canteens all influence behaviour and therefore impact on health. The aim of the Swiss Nutrition Policy is to shape conditions in such a way that the healthy choice becomes the easy choice. For this to happen, stakeholders from politics, business and private organisations must assume responsibility for health matters.

The priorities:

- Improve food composition and promote innovation in a dialogue with business. The focus here is on reducing sugar and salt.
- Promote healthy meals in conjunction with community catering and other partners in schools, businesses and care homes.
- Restrict advertising targeted at children for foods that are too fatty, sweet or salty, in dialogue with business and on a voluntary basis.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

The Milan Declaration of 4 August 2015 on reducing sugars in yoghurt and breakfast cereals, which Federal Councillor Alain Berset signed together with ten Swiss companies during his visit to Expo 2015 in Milan, represents a first step towards improving the recipes for these two food groups. The companies are prepared to voluntarily review the formulations of all products in the yoghurt and breakfast cereal food categories. Wherever possible and reasonable, they will submit to actionsanté pledges to reduce sugar levels. If the companies concerned have already submitted pledges for the aforementioned food categories, they will continue pursue these objectives.



3. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

Coordinating objectives and activities at a national and also an international level is a prerequisite for an effective and successful Swiss Nutrition Policy. Collaboration also encourages an exchange of experiences and knowledge..

The priorities:

- Networking nutritional stakeholders at a national level;
- Exploiting synergy and coordinating activities;
- Optimising existing platforms;
- Switzerland's involvement in international WHO and EU bodies.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

The nutrition platform established by the FSVO and the Federal Commission for Nutrition (FCN) facilitates a technical and informal dialogue between representatives from the fields of health promotion, disease prevention, consumer protection, research, business, FCN and the FSVO.

Since 2007, multi-year cantonal action programmes have ensured that children and young people eat healthily and get enough exercise.

Within the European Salt Action Network, set up by the WHO/Europe, some member countries exchange their experiences on progress on national salt initiatives and are given information on the latest studies. The FSVO chairs this network.



4. MONITORING AND RESEARCH

An evidence-based nutrition policy requires a scientific basis. This will help to answer political questions and highlight any gaps and action areas. Government research and monitoring provides an important basis for impact monitoring and the on-going development of the Swiss Nutrition Strategy.

The priorities:

- Developing and pursuing monitoring projects such as menuCH, breastfeeding monitoring, human biomonitoring and iodine monitoring;
- Creating a scientific basis for the correlations between diet and risk factors / diseases;
- Gathering data on the composition of foodstuffs available in Switzerland;
- Creating a basis and tools for monitoring the effectiveness of measures to improve food and restrict marketing.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

The "menuCH" national nutrition survey has for the first time provided representative data on food consumption, eating and exercise habits and also anthropomorphic measurements (body size, body weight, waist and hip measurements) for the inhabitants of Switzerland. This data allows us to make statements regarding the energy and nutrient supply of the Swiss population, and will form the basis for fine tuning the nutrition policy. It enables us to develop, systematically plan and implement measures for a healthy and safe choice of food, and to evaluate and adapt existing measures.

NEXT STEPS: THE ACTION PLAN

To flesh out the Swiss Nutrition Policy, the FDHA has tasked the FSVO with drawing up an action plan by the end of 2017, with the involvement of all key stakeholders. International and national strategic orientations and developments will form the basis for this plan.

An action plan will enable us to take account of the developments of recent years and compile a tool kit and set of measures in conjunction with external stakeholders. We will also be able to set priorities that will be incorporated into top-level strategies or other areas of policy.

The action plan is intended to describe measures in detail, define realistic, measurable targets and highlight progress towards implementing the nutrition strategy.

With the action plan, the Swiss Nutrition Strategy will become a pillar of the NCD strategy, which represents one of the major challenges in the Federal Council's health policy.



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