

Securing Packaged Food Policy Wins

Cardiovascular Health Partner Convening 2026

This brief is a pre-read for the **sodium reduction: securing packaged food policy wins** breakout group during the Write the Headline: Co-Creating the Future of CVH session on May 7th. It outlines how the rapid growth of packaged foods is reshaping diets globally, driving increased intake of sodium and other harmful nutrients, where policy progress remains uneven, and what strategies can most effectively improve the food supply at scale in the next phase of CVH partnership work.

1. Packaged food and health

The packaged food market is rapidly growing

Low- and middle-income countries are facing a growing double burden of undernutrition and obesity. These problems are connected, as packaged and ultra-processed products which are typically high in salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats are energy-dense but nutrient-poor. Rapid urbanization and changing lifestyles are driving a rise in the consumption of processed and "fast foods" in LMICs, crowding out traditional staples and nutritious options while fueling diseases like diabetes and hypertension.

Excess sodium is built into the packaged food supply

Today, most people consume more than double the recommended amount of sodium each day. This is not simply a matter of personal choice but is increasingly driven by the high levels of sodium added to food products without our awareness. While the primary source of sodium is still salt added during cooking or at the table in many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), an increasing yet widely varying proportion of sodium intake is now derived from packaged foods, often ranging around 25% or more in certain populations.

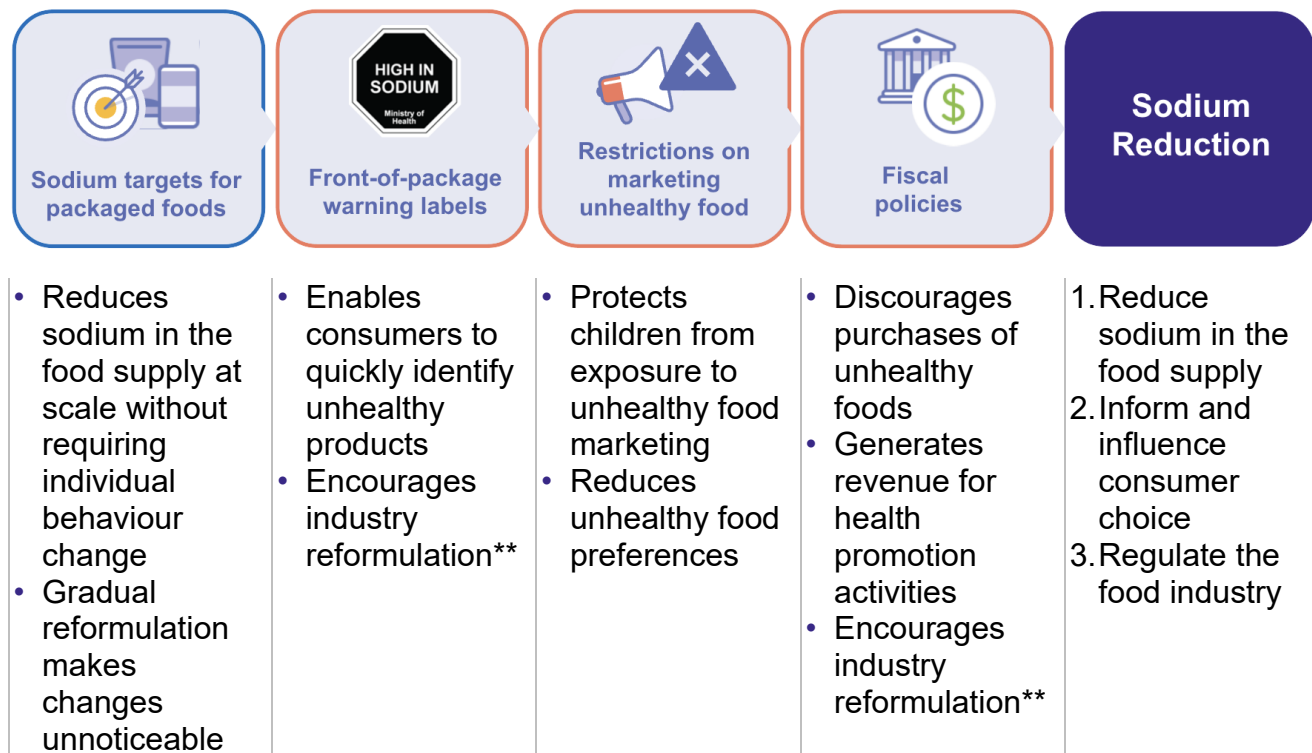
Diet-related NCDs are a leading driver of cardiovascular disease globally

Diets high in sodium were responsible for an estimated 1.7 million deaths in 2023 and were the second leading dietary risk for death due to cardiovascular disease.

Governments increasingly recognize the need for mandatory, regulatory approaches, but policy adoption and implementation remain uneven and unmet.

2. Packaged food policies

A comprehensive packaged food strategy is the most effective

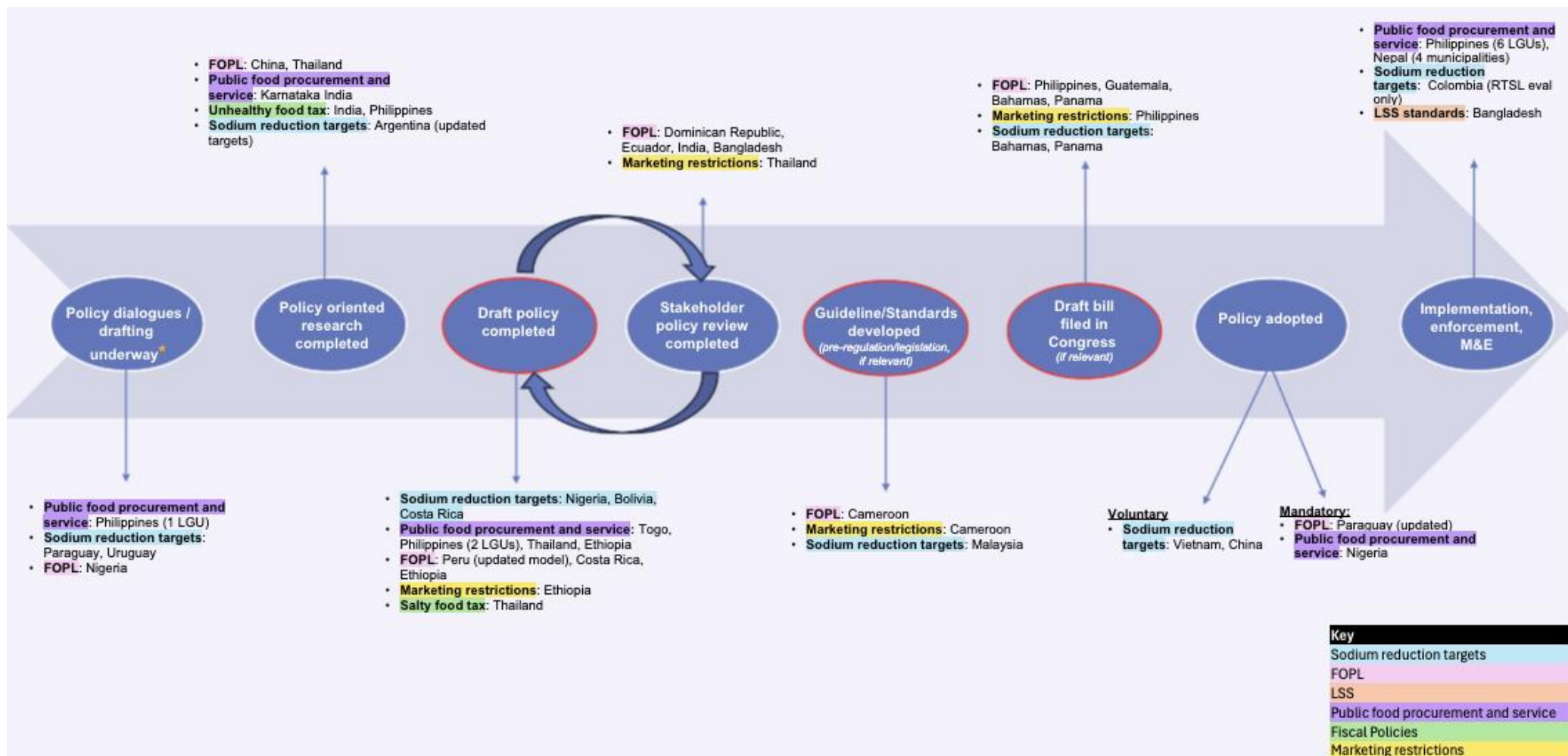


* Salt targets only address sodium, while other interventions address calories, sugar, saturated fat, and sodium.

** Reformulation is a secondary outcome rather than the key objective of the policies.

*** Fiscal policies are not included within the Bloomberg-funded initiative

Connecting to public food procurement: Together, packaged food policies can enable healthier food environments in public institutions. For example, foods carrying warning labels are commonly banned from sales in school.

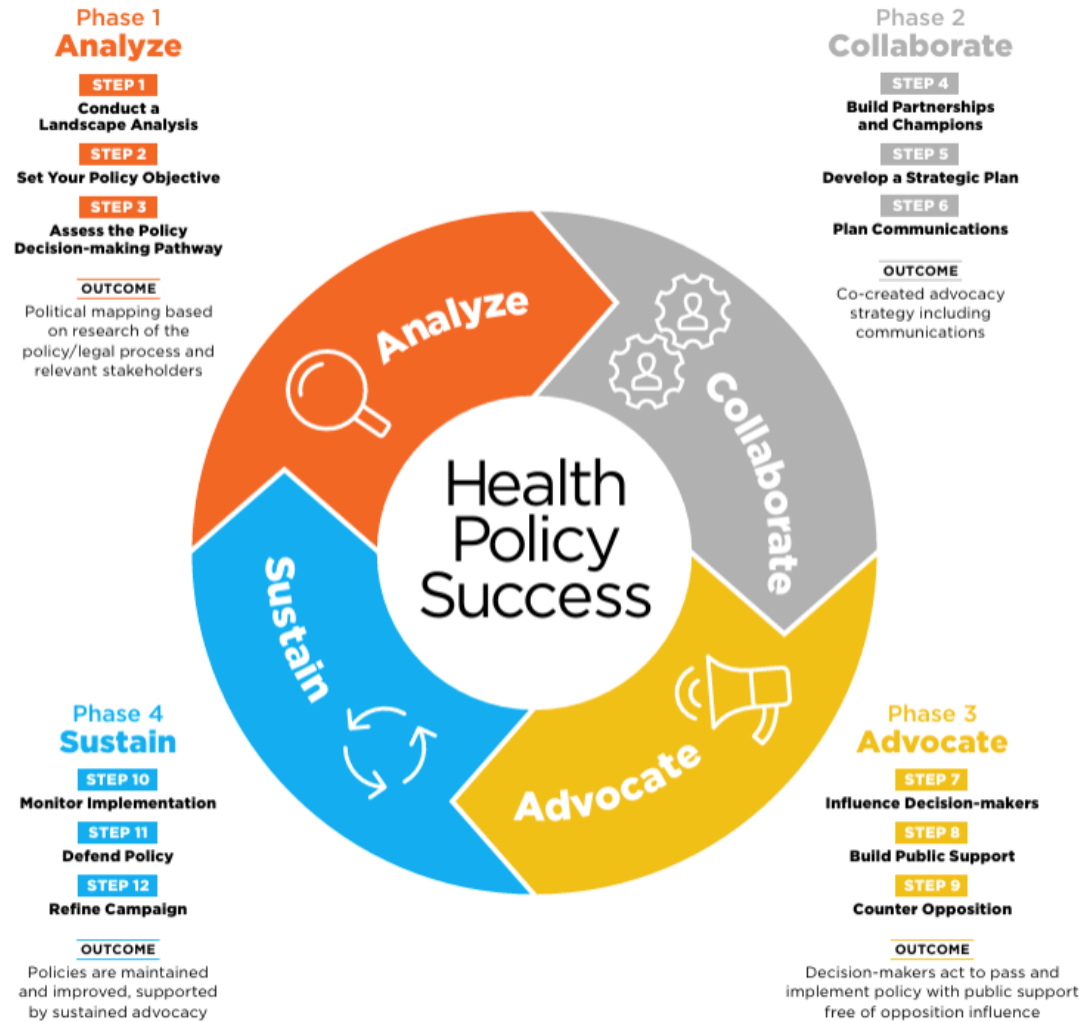


3. Where we are now

- Many efforts remain in design or pre-adoption stages (not pictured above)
- Even where policies are adopted, implementation and enforcement remains a challenge
- Barriers are largely political and commercial – not technical – with efforts by industry to undermine and weaken policies throughout the policy process

How change happens: Four Phases to Health Policy Success (GHA)

Progress depends not just on doing these activities but doing them in the right way, at the right time, in each given context.



Source: [GHA's Policy Advocacy Guide](#)