



Abstract

# Aotearoa's Food Environment Dashboard: Sharing and Holding to Account <sup>†</sup>

Caitlin Haliburton <sup>1,\*</sup>, Kelly Garton <sup>2</sup>, Sally Mackay <sup>2</sup>  and Gary Sacks <sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> National Institution for Health Innovation, School of Population Health, University of Auckland, Auckland 1023, New Zealand

<sup>2</sup> Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Population Health, University of Auckland, Auckland 1023, New Zealand

<sup>3</sup> Global Obesity Centre, Deakin University, Geelong 3125, Australia

\* Correspondence: caitlin.haliburton@auckland.ac.nz

† Presented at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Nutrition Society of New Zealand 2022, Wellington, New Zealand, 1–2 December 2022.

**Abstract:** Unhealthy diets and excess energy intake are the greatest contributors to disease and disability in Aotearoa. Unhealthy diets are heavily influenced by obesogenic food environments. Governments and the private sector have critical roles to play in creating healthier food environments, yet New Zealand consistently falls behind international best practice, suggesting a lack of accountability. The accountability cycle has five phases: setting the account, taking account, sharing the account, holding to account, and responding to the account. The ongoing monitoring of the healthiness of food environments is essential to identify key problems, assess the impact of policies, hold governments and food companies to their commitments, measure progress, and support future implementation. The Food Environments Dashboard Aotearoa was created to collate and translate more than a decade's worth of food environment monitoring studies and their findings for policy-makers and public health advocacy groups to encourage policy change. Based on Australia's Food Environments Dashboard, the key indicators from these studies have been identified and assessed against defined criteria to give a green (promotes health), amber (needs improvement) or red (unhealthy) rating. Data from studies implemented between 2014 and 2022 were reviewed and 65 key indicators were selected for ten domains: government, food composition, settings (schools, hospitals), food labelling, food affordability, food promotion, food retail, private sector, trade and investment, and equity. Most domains were assessed as red and none as green. The Dashboard contributes to sharing and holding to account by providing key indicators in an accessible format that will be regularly updated. We encourage the public health nutrition community of practice to contribute to, and utilise, the Dashboard to improve food environments for Aotearoa.

**Keywords:** food environments; knowledge translation; accountability; food policy



**Citation:** Haliburton, C.; Garton, K.; Mackay, S.; Sacks, G. Aotearoa's Food Environment Dashboard: Sharing and Holding to Account. *Med. Sci. Forum* **2023**, *18*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/msf2023018014>

Academic Editors: Claire Smith, Shabnam Jalili-Moghaddan and Michelle Gibbs

Published: 13 March 2023



**Copyright:** © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, G.S., K.G. and S.M.; methodology, K.G., S.M. and C.H.; formal analysis, K.G., S.M. and C.H.; writing—original draft preparation, S.M.; writing—review and editing, K.G., S.M., C.H. and G.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received funding from a Centre for Research Excellence grant in 'Reducing Salt Intake using Food Policy Interventions' (APP1117300) and a National Heart Foundation grant 'The Food Policy Impact Evaluation 2020/2021' (Grant 1820).

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** No new data were created or analysed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.