The food environment in Canada: Current policies and priority actions

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INFORMAS

→International Network for Food and Obesity/non-communicable diseases Research, Monitoring and Action Support

INFORMAS

Benchmarking food environments

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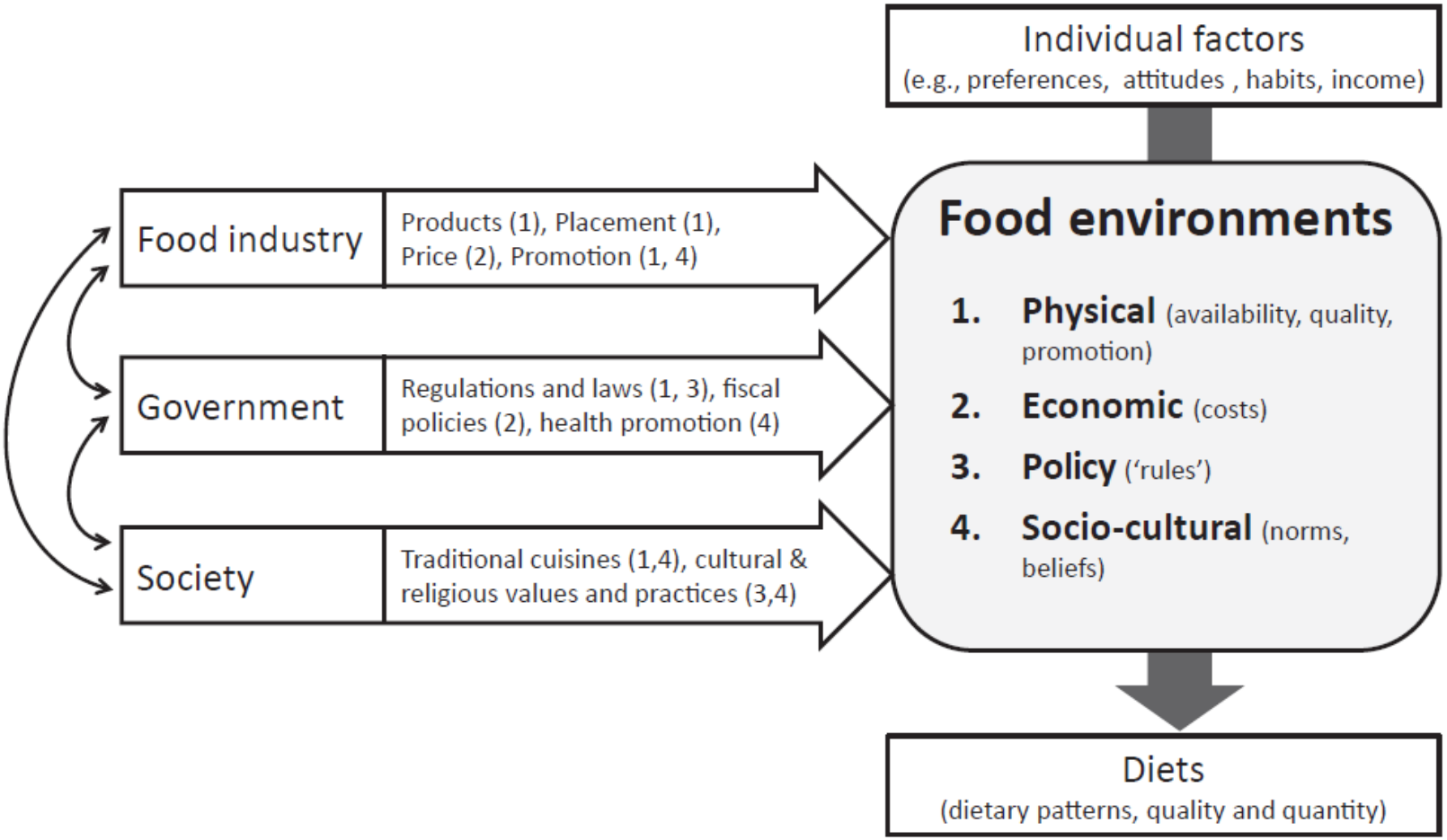
Food environment



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Swinburn et al. for INFORMAS. Obesity Reviews (2013) 14 (Suppl. 1), 1–12

Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI)

- → Comprehensive policy evaluation tool **developed by international experts**
- → Compares policy implementation to **international benchmarks** of best practices
- → Implemented to date in 20 countries

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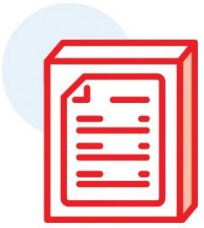
Swinburn et al. for INFORMAS. Obesity Reviews (2013) 14 (Suppl. 1), 24–37

Policy domains

Food formulation

Food provision



Food labelling

Food retail

Food prices

Food trade and governance

Food promotion

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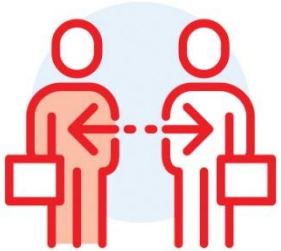
Infrastructure Support domains

Political leadership

Monitoring and intelligence

Governance



Platforms for interaction

Funding and resources

Health-in-all-policies

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International good practices

- → **Single or multiple** ‘good practices’ or ‘benchmarks’ from global policies
- → Policies and practices that are **already implemented** by international governments
- → Good practices are **evolving over time** (current as of Spring 2017)

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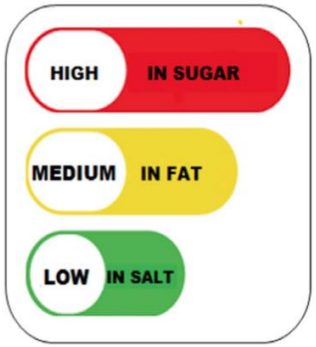
International good practices

EXAMPLE: Front-of-package labelling

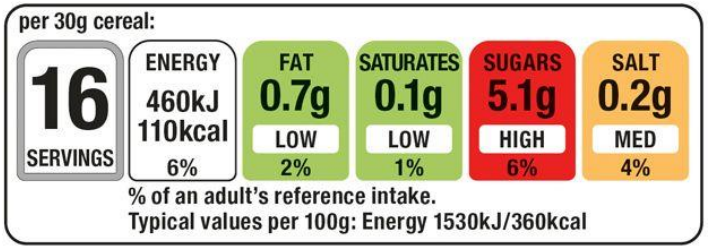
BENCHMARKS:

Chile*



Ecuador*

FSANZ



UK

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Food-EPI Process

*Policy documents available at www.labbelab.utoronto.ca/Food-EPI-Canada-2017

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Provincial/territorial ratings (online)

- → Experts **randomized** to one province or territory
- → **5 to 7** rated each province or territory
- → **Online rating process** for relevant policy and infrastructure support indicators

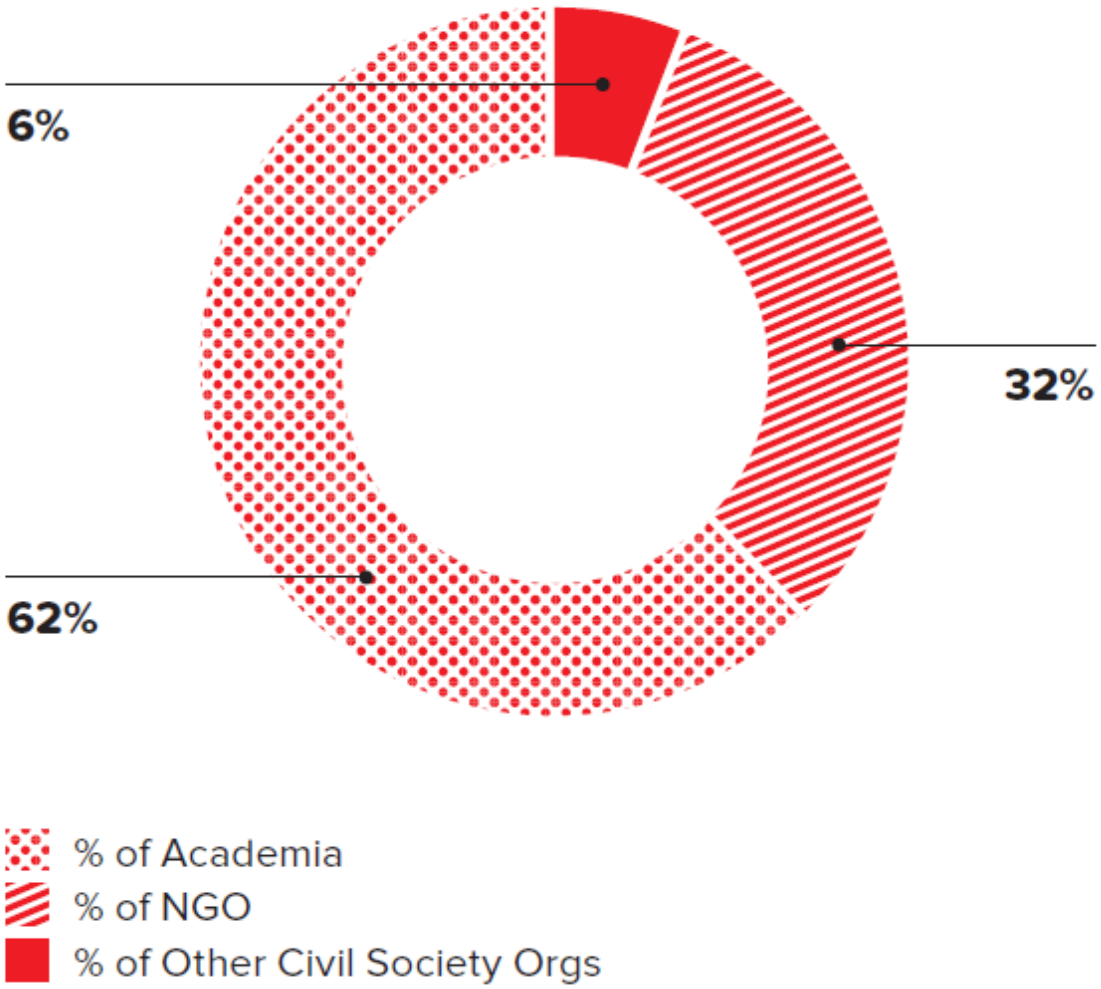
Federal ratings (workshops)

- → Three workshops (Toronto & Vancouver) with experts (**N=71**)
- → Summary of international best practices
- → Summary of Canadian federal policy as of January 1, 2017
- → Ratings on scale of 1 to 5

  1 = 0-20% implementation
  2 = 20-40% implementation
  3 = 40-60% implementation
  4 = 60-80% implementation
  5 = 80-100% implementation

- → Summary of ratings and discussion of policy actions

Expert breakdown (n=71)



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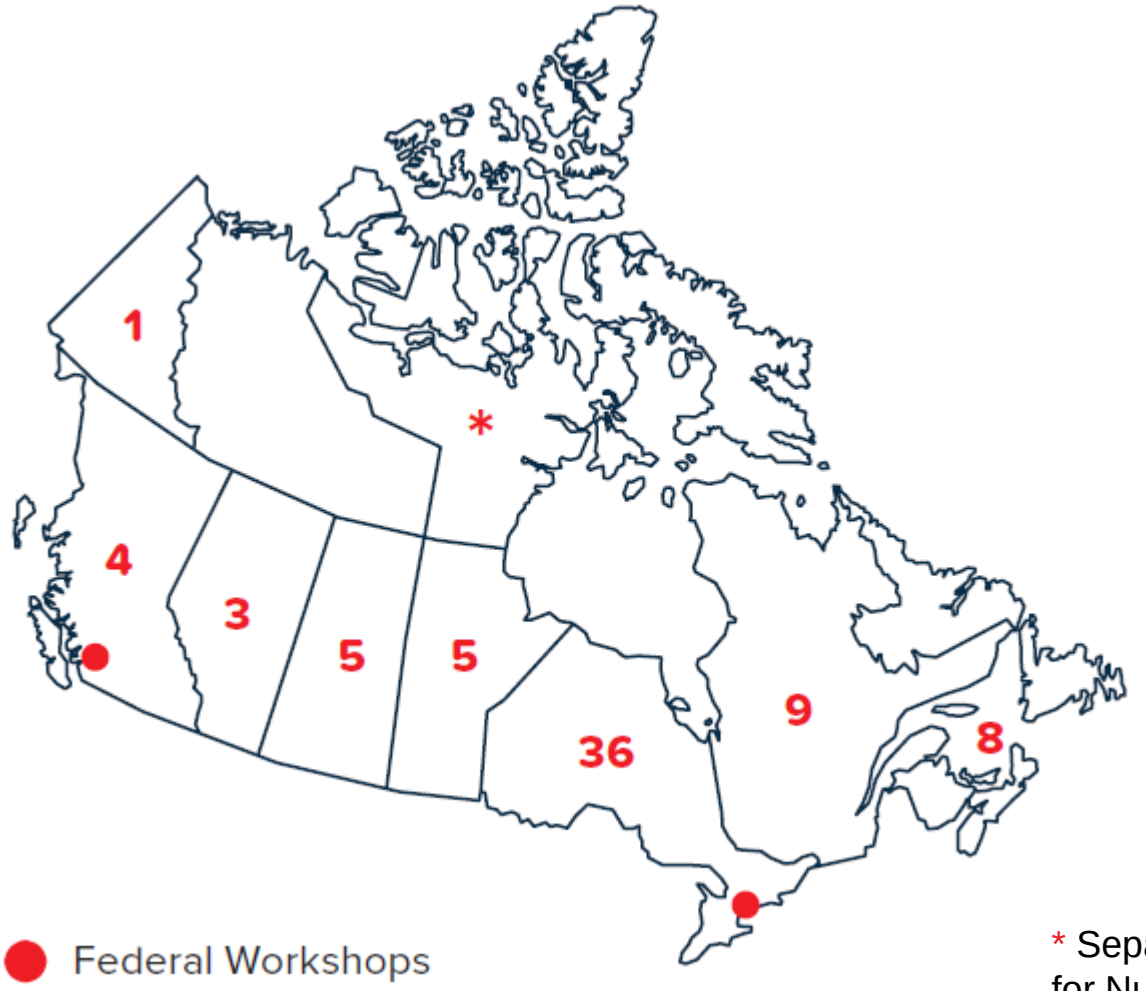
Geographic location of experts



* Separate process for Nunavut, at their request

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Prioritization

Online process using criteria for ‘Importance’ and ‘Achievability’ elements

IMPORTANCE:

- → Need
- → Impact
- → Equity
- → Other positive effects
- → Other negative effects

ACHIEVABILITY

- → Feasibility
- → Acceptability
- → Affordability
- → Efficiency

3-7 experts prioritized each province/territory

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RESULTS

Federal Government

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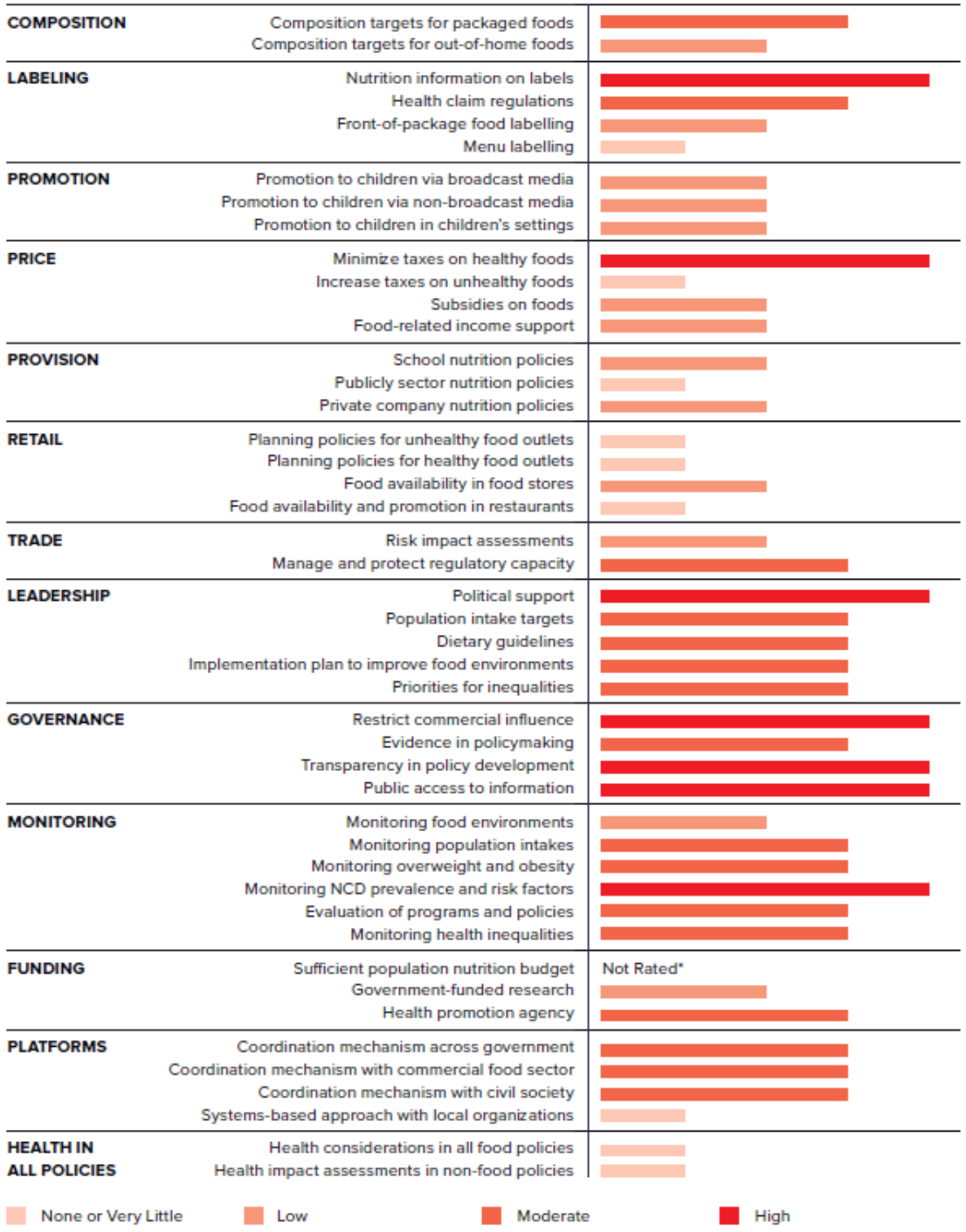
→ **Released December 2017**

→ **Reports available at:** http://labbelab.utoronto.ca/food-epi-canada-2017/

Federal Results

Expert ratings of implementation for federal government policy and infrastructure support areas

*Unable to rate *Sufficient population nutrition budget*



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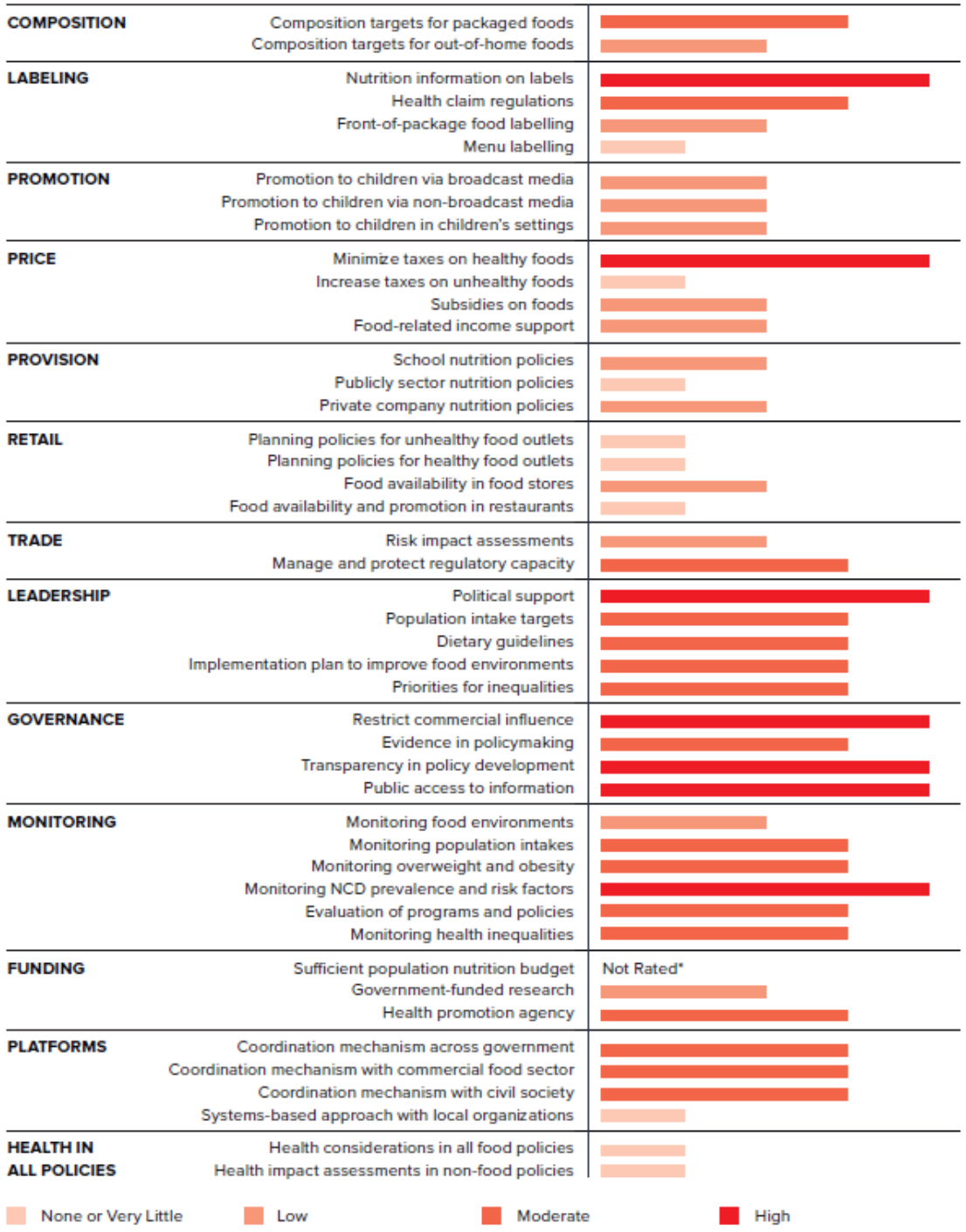
Federal Results

AREAS WHERE CANADA IS DOING WELL:

- → Nutrition labelling on food products
- → Minimize taxes on healthy foods
- → Leadership
- → Transparency and access to information
- → Monitoring NCD prevalence and risk factors



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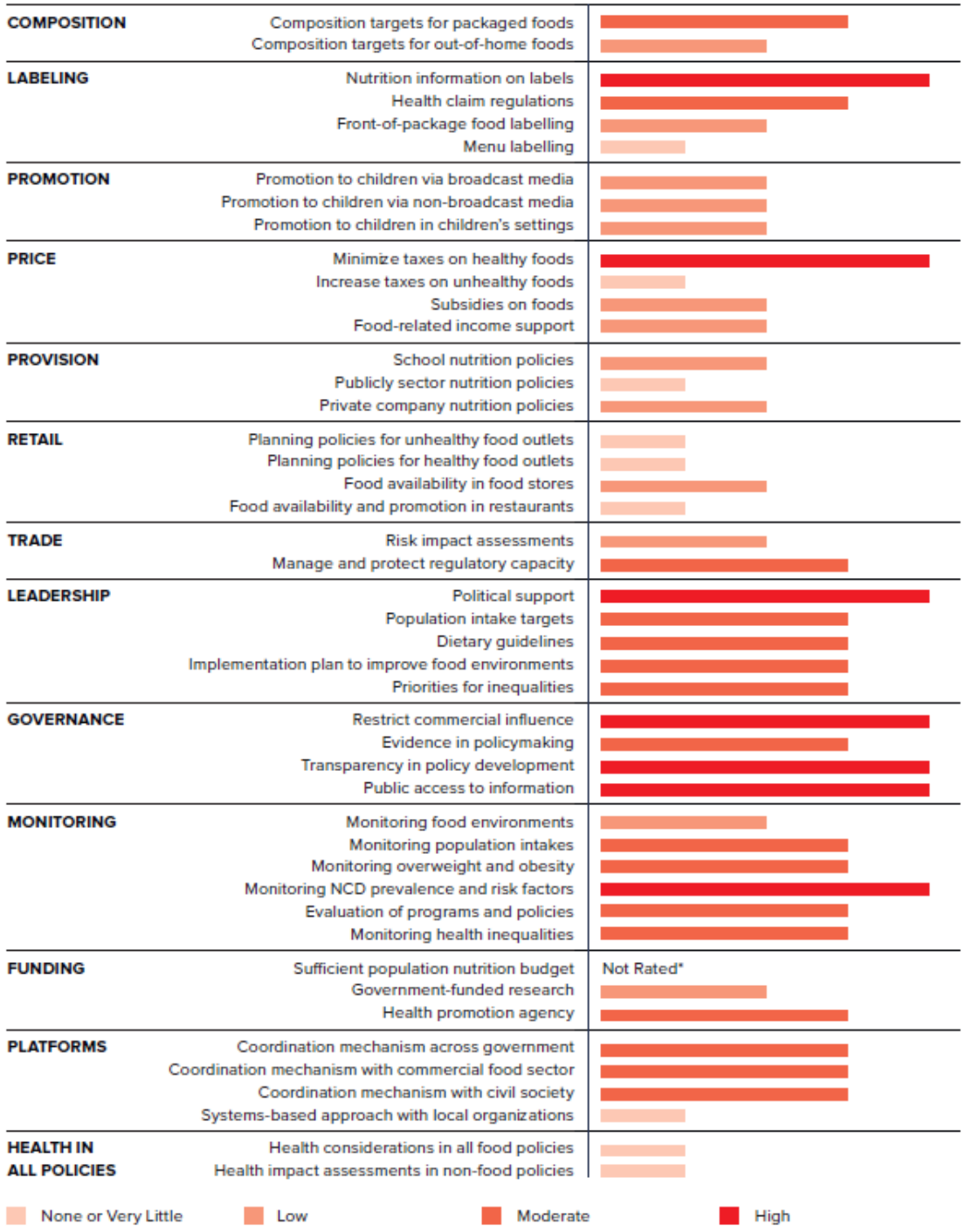
Federal Results

AREAS WHERE CANADA IS DOING WELL:

- Menu labelling
- Taxes on unhealthy foods
- Policies in government-funded settings to provide healthy foods and support healthy food choices
- Support for healthy food policies in food stores or food service outlets
- Taking a health-in-all-policies approach



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Prioritization – Policy actions

Prioritized policy actions
(Top 3 of 6)

1. **Prohibit advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages to children under the age of 17** through all forms of media, with an eventual goal to prohibit all advertising to children
2. Implement **targets for the food supply for sodium, free sugar, and saturated fat content in packaged and restaurant foods** using a structured voluntary approach
3. Implement an **excise tax on all sugary drinks**, and invest the revenue to address public health issues

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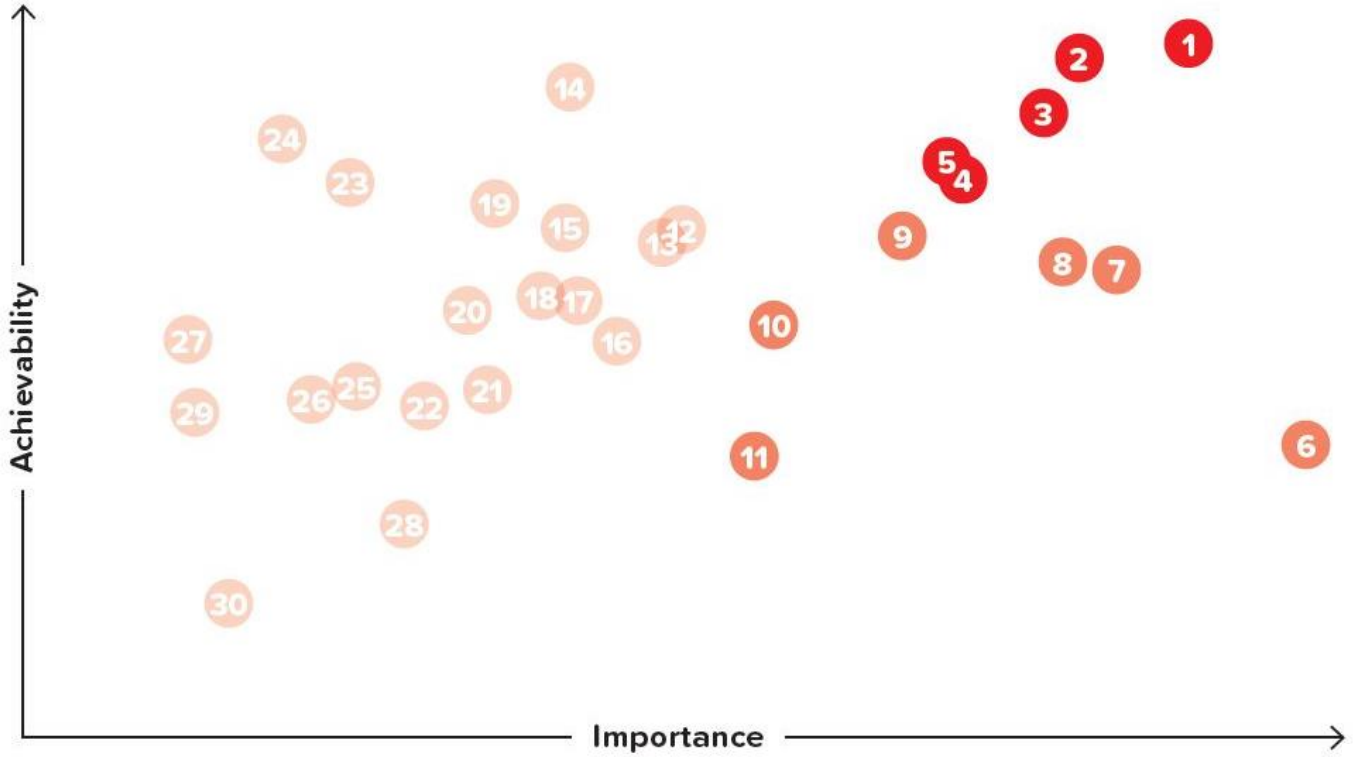
Prioritization – Infrastructure support actions



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Prioritized infrastructure support actions (Top 3 of 5)

1. Develop public **population-level intake targets** for sodium, saturated fat, free sugar, and vegetables and fruit, and monitor progress over time
2. Implement **revisions for a more comprehensive, multi-component Canada's Food Guide including environmental impact, sustainability and cultural appropriateness**, with resources for both the public and practitioners/ policy makers
3. **Monitor and revise the Healthy Eating Strategy** with a timeline for policy action and a long term vision beyond the current election cycle

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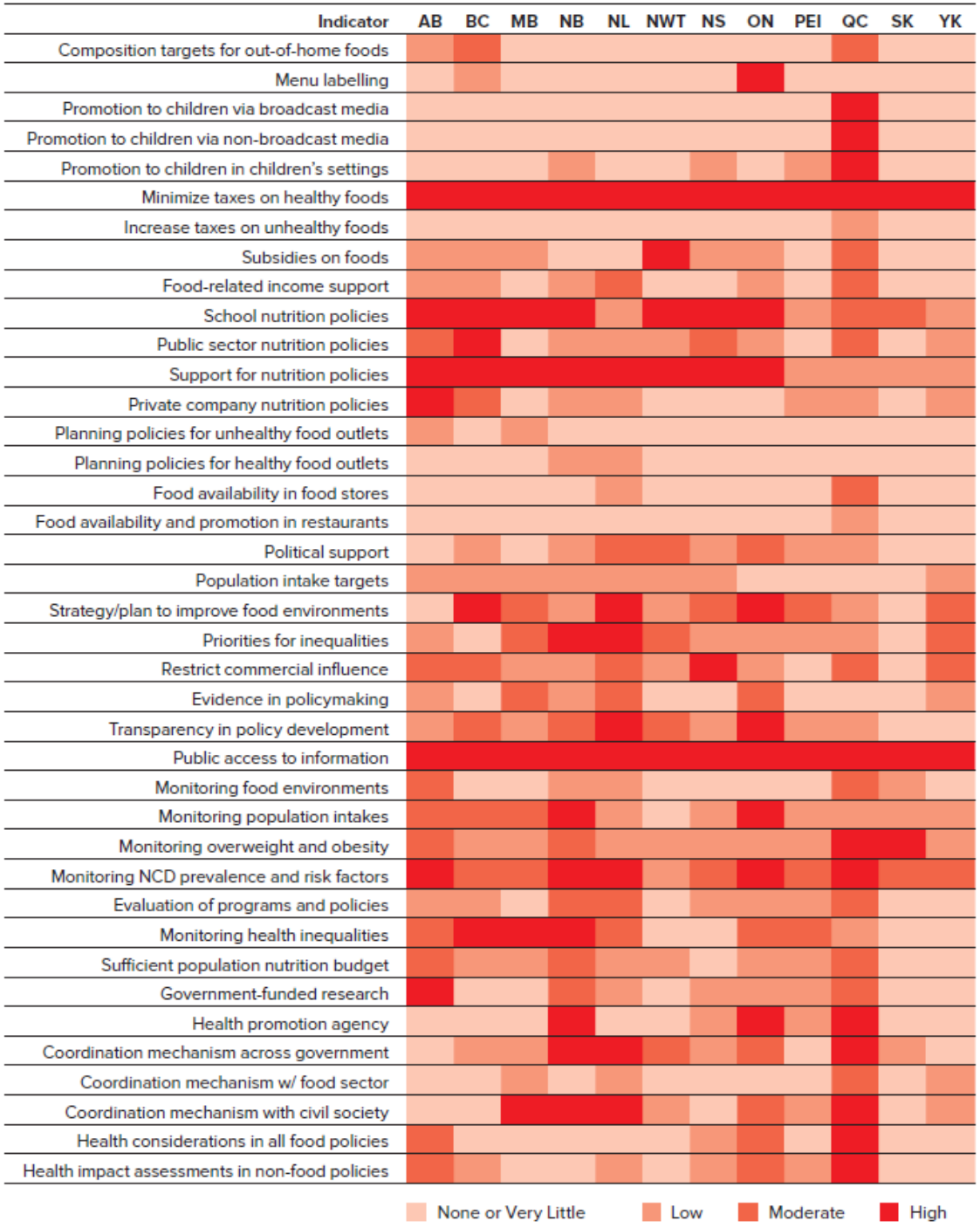
Results for all provinces/ territories

→**Vertical dark lines =** provinces/territories are performing well

→**Horizontal dark lines =** where all provinces/territories are performing well



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Policy implications

- → Provides a synthesis of knowledge from **thought leaders in food environments** from across Canada
- → Many recommendations **align with and extend action beyond** the *Healthy Eating Strategy*
- → Mix of **policy and infrastructure support** – this exercise does not prioritize one over the other

Policy implications

- → **Comprehensive** policy action is needed at the federal/provincial/territorial level
- → **Cross-jurisdictional examples** of policy opportunities
- → Important lessons can be drawn from **international examples**
- → Efforts **must be on-going** as international policies continue to be implemented

Resources

http://labbelab.utoronto.ca/food-epi-canada-2017/

- → Summary of policy implementation for all provinces/territories and federally
- → Summary report and each provincial/territorial report
- → Contains full list of prioritized actions for each jurisdiction AND international examples

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Next steps

- → Next benchmarking study 2019/2020
- → Local Food-EPI work
- → Broader INFORMAS research program

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http://labbelab.utoronto.ca/food-epi-canada-2017/

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CIHR IRSC
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WHO Collaborating Centre on Nutrition Policy for Chronic Disease Prevention

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