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Setting up a Fruit and Vegetable Promotion Initiative in a Developing Country

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Setting up a F&V promotion initiative in a developing country

- What is the feasibility?
- Who would be the partners, the setting(s)?
- What constraints could be expected in setting up a program promoting fruit and vegetable consumption?

Setting up a f&v promotion initiative in a developing country

- What is the feasibility?

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Positive points at the demand side:

- F&V are usually **well appreciated** by most populations - perhaps this is more universal for fruits and actions to promote the culinary valorization of vegetables may apply.
- F&V are already seen by most populations as **healthy foods** - again this is perhaps clearer for fruits and actions to promote the nutritional properties of vegetables may also apply. In sum, F&V constitute a fertile terrain for promotion.

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Positive points at the supply side:

- Most developing countries are situated in tropical and semi-tropical areas where a variety of F&V are **easily produced all year round**.
- F&V in the developing countries are usually produced by **small farmers** in a very **competitive economy** (an important positive side effect of a F&V promotion initiative is the better income distribution that it can generate in the society)

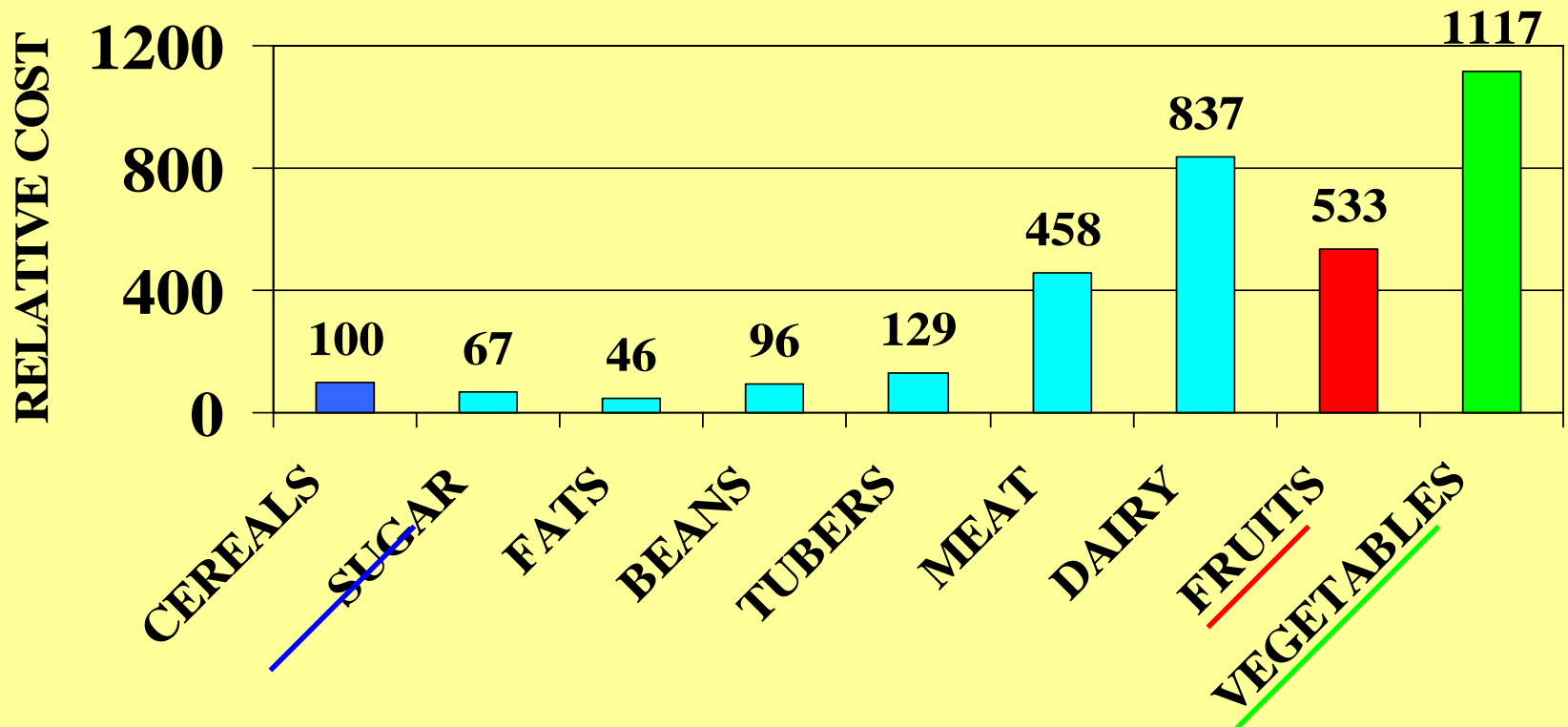
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Negative point at the demand side:

F&V are relatively **expense** (the cost per calorie may be much higher than for other foods) and the marginal price reduction obtained with a higher demand due to the promotion initiative may be not sufficient to increase consumption among lower income groups. Actions involving **technical support** to the production and distribution of F&V and/or **tax exemptions** may be necessary.

COST PER CALORY OF SELECTED FOOD GROUPS FOR THE FIRST INCOME DECILE .

Brazil 1997



Source: Monteiro 2003

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Negative points at the supply side:

- Vegetables usually require **abundant water supply** (this has to be considered in dry regions when selecting appropriate varieties to promote).
- F&V are **perishable commodities** that require adequate distribution and commercialization systems to reduce waste (improving d&c systems and research on new less perishable varieties are key areas for public investments).
- Some F&V may require **intensive use of pesticides** (this is an area for public regulations)

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- Who would be the partners, the setting(s)?

The **partners** for a F&V promotion initiative:

- ✓ **Public sector**: federal, province and municipal agencies in the health, agriculture and education sectors.
- ✓ **Private sector**: F&V producers associations, retailers associations, Health Insurance and Marketing companies
- ✓ **NGOs**: Professionals associations, consumers associations.

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- What constraints could be expected?

Constraints for F&V promotion initiatives in the developing world

- ✓ High **cost** of F&V.
- ✓ Inefficient **distribution and commercialization** systems.
- ✓ High demand for **water** and **use of pesticides**
- ✓ Misleading “junk food” advertisement and false health claims in processed foods.
- ✓ An out-of-date view of malnutrition in low-middle and high-middle income countries.

**Two aspects of F&V promotion initiatives
relevant for the developing world**
(and possibly for the developed world too)

- ❖ Integration into national intersectoral food and nutrition policies.
- ❖ Consistency with the predominant stage of the nutrition transition in each country.

Aspects of f&v promotion initiatives relevant for the developing world

- ❖ A F&V promotion initiative in a developing country has to be an **integrated component of the national intersectoral food and nutrition policy** (and, in particular, of the national strategy on diet, physical activity and health):
 - to be **sustainable**;
 - to **reach all** social classes;
 - to be **consistent** with and take advantage of other public actions and programs.

Aspects of f&v promotion initiatives relevant for the developing world

- ❖ The short term **goals** and the design of **messages** of F&V promotion initiatives should be **tailored to the stage of the nutrition transition** faced by each country.

Most **low income developing countries** are societies situated between the “**famine**” stage (scarce, monotonous, low energy-dense, cereal-based diets) and the “**receding famine**” stage (less scarce, less monotonous, but still low energy-dense, minimally processed, cereal-based diets) where **under-nutrition disorders prevail**.

For these countries the simple diet message “**Eat more F&V**” can be **adequate** (although not sufficient, of course).

However, most **low-middle** and probably all **high-middle income countries** are leaving the “receding famine” stage and entering quickly the “**westernized, mass consumption**” stage of the nutrition transition where **low fiber, high energy-dense, fatty, salty, sugary diets**, with increasing undesirable content of **animal products**, are **aggressively marketed**. These diets, coupled with increasing sedentary life-styles, determine escalating rates of **obesity, diabetes, CVDs and several types of cancer**.

For these low-middle and high-middle income developing countries, the more adequate diet message should be something like:

“Increase the consumption of F&V to displace part of animal products and processed foods from your diet”,

rather than simply:

“Eat more F&V”

or more understandable messages as:

Have a grilled seasoned eggplant as your main course instead of a steak.

Have your pasta with squash and dried tomatoes instead a creamy sauce or fried meat balls.

Have a salad instead of French fries.

Change your creamy dessert for a fresh tasty fruit.

Drink a fresh fruit juice instead of a soft drink.

Have a dry fruit snack instead of salty, fatty snacks.