Implementation of Healthy Food Environment Policies in Ghana: Gaps and Priorities to Prevent Nutrition-Related NCDs

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Background

- Ghana is experiencing an increase in obesity and other diet-related NCDs, including Type 2 diabetes, CVD & some cancers.

- Urban dwellers & women are most affected: overweight / obesity among Ghanaian women has increased by about one-third in a decade (from 25% in 2003 to 40% in 2014).
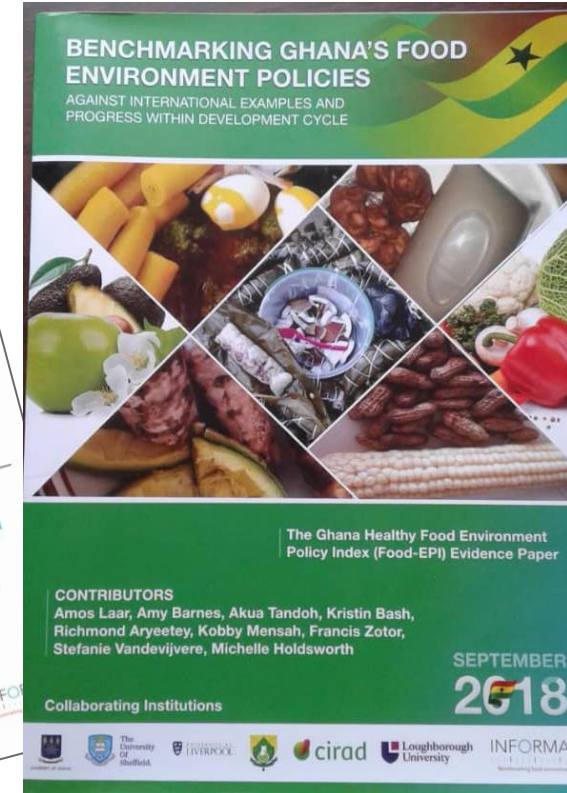
Background

- The overconsumption of unhealthy diets that are energy-dense and nutrient-poor is implicated in the onset of diet-related NCDs.

- Unhealthy food environments drive unhealthy diets.

  - **Food environments** are the collective physical, economic, political and socio-cultural surroundings, opportunities ……that influence what food people eat and their nutritional status

Aims

Assess the <u>extent of Government's implementation</u> of recommended policies to create healthy food environments.

Identify <u>priority actions</u> for the Governments to take forward in partnership.

Benchmarking Ghana's policies for creating healthy food environments
Compared to international examples and within a planning and development cycle

Ghana Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI)
country scorecards and priority recommendations for action

January 2019

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Collaborating institutions:

BENCHMARKING GHANA'S FOOD ENVIRONMENT POLICIES
AGAINST INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES AND PROGRESS WITHIN DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

The Ghana Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI) Evidence Paper

CONTRIBUTORS
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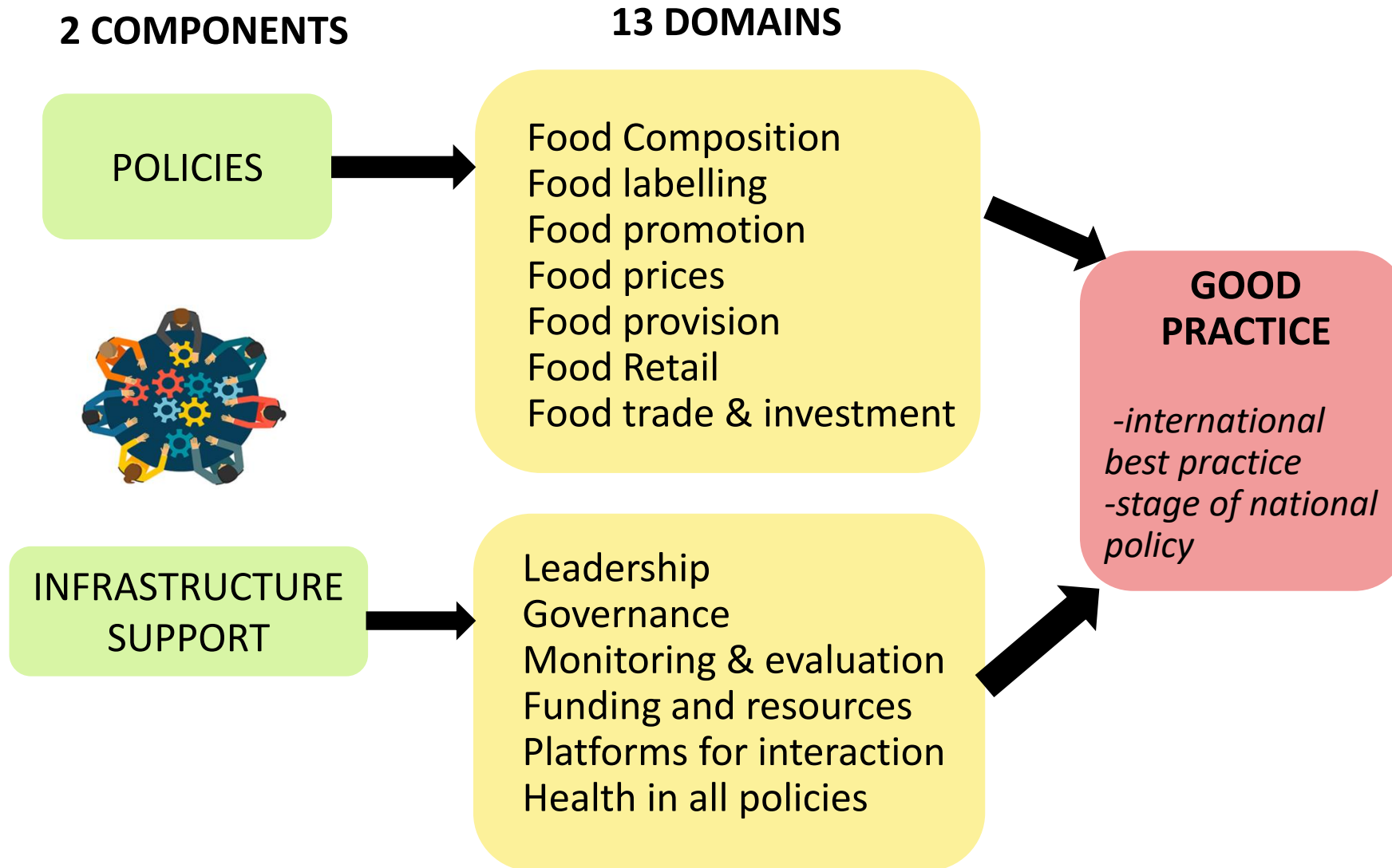
SEPTEMBER 2018

Collaborating Institutions

Review

Monitoring and benchmarking government policies and actions to improve the healthiness of food environments: a proposed Government Healthy Food Environment Policy Index

B. Swinburn[1,2#], S. Vandevijvere[1#], V. Kraak[2#], G. Sacks[2#], W. Snowdon[2,3#], C. Hawkes[4#], S. Barquera[5], S. Friel[6], B. Kelly[7], S. Kumanyika[8], M. L'Abbé[9], A. Lee[10,11], T. Lobstein[12,13], J. Ma[14], J. Macmullan[15], S. Mohan[16], C. Monteiro[17], B. Neal[18], M. Rayner[19], D. Sanders[20] and C. Walker[21] for INFORMAS^

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The Food-EPI tool & process

2 COMPONENTS

13 DOMAINS

POLICIES →

Food Composition
Food labelling
Food promotion
Food prices
Food provision
Food Retail
Food trade & investment

INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT →

Leadership
Governance
Monitoring & evaluation
Funding and resources
Platforms for interaction
Health in all policies

GOOD PRACTICE

-international best practice
-stage of national policy

22 indicators for policies and 22 for infrastructure support: **44 in Ghana**

Process for assessing the extent of food environment policy implementation in Ghana

1. Document & verify relevant government action through systematic searching and information requests.
-*Validate with government officials.*

2. Convene a panel of non-government and government experts on food and nutrition *Ghana (n=19) Kenya (n=16)*
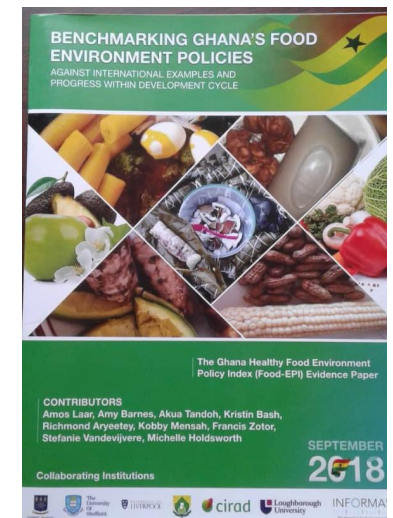
3. Assess the extent of government action in relation to:

-*stage of national policy action*
-*international best practice*

4. Identify and prioritise actions for the government to take forward:
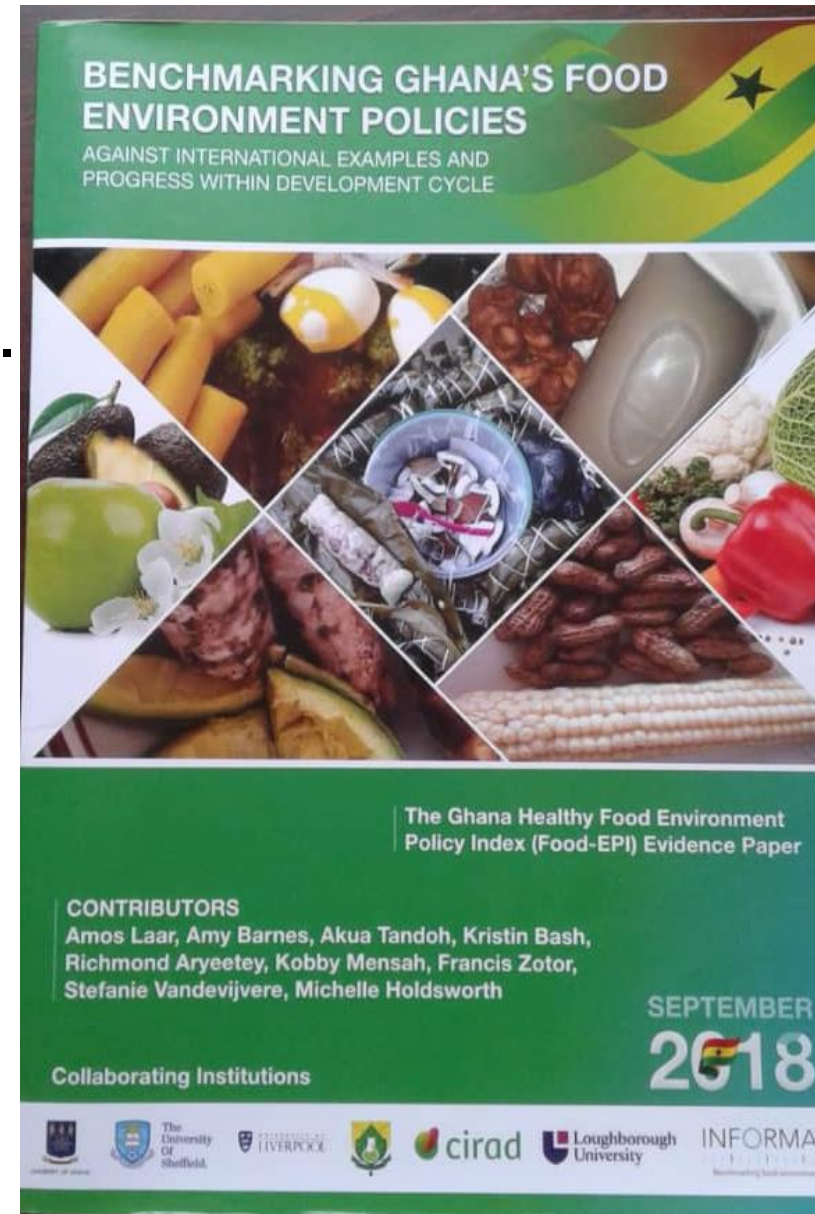
-*importance*
-*feasibility*

Document & verify

- Evidence on the extent of government action to implement food environment policies was collected across 13 policy and infrastructure support domains and 44 related sub-areas (indicators) of good practice

- Government websites, websites of other institutions (e.g. UN agencies) and academic databases (for peer-reviewed journal articles) were systematically searched for evidence of action

- Identified evidence was collated and documented in an 'Evidence Paper', which was shared with relevant government officials for validation.

- In the Evidence Paper, information about action taken by the Government of Ghana to create healthier food environments was presented alongside examples of international best practice, as identified by INFORMAS

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SEPTEMBER 2018

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Convene

- A panel of 19 experts on food and nutrition issues in Ghana was convened during the process of collecting evidence.

- Members of the expert panel were from non-government (academia, civil society and charitable) and government sectors.

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Assess

- The expert panel reviewed the Evidence Paper and used the information within it to rate the extent of government action to implement policies on food environments and infrastructure support against:

  - 1) an in-country policy cycle

  - 2) international best practice.
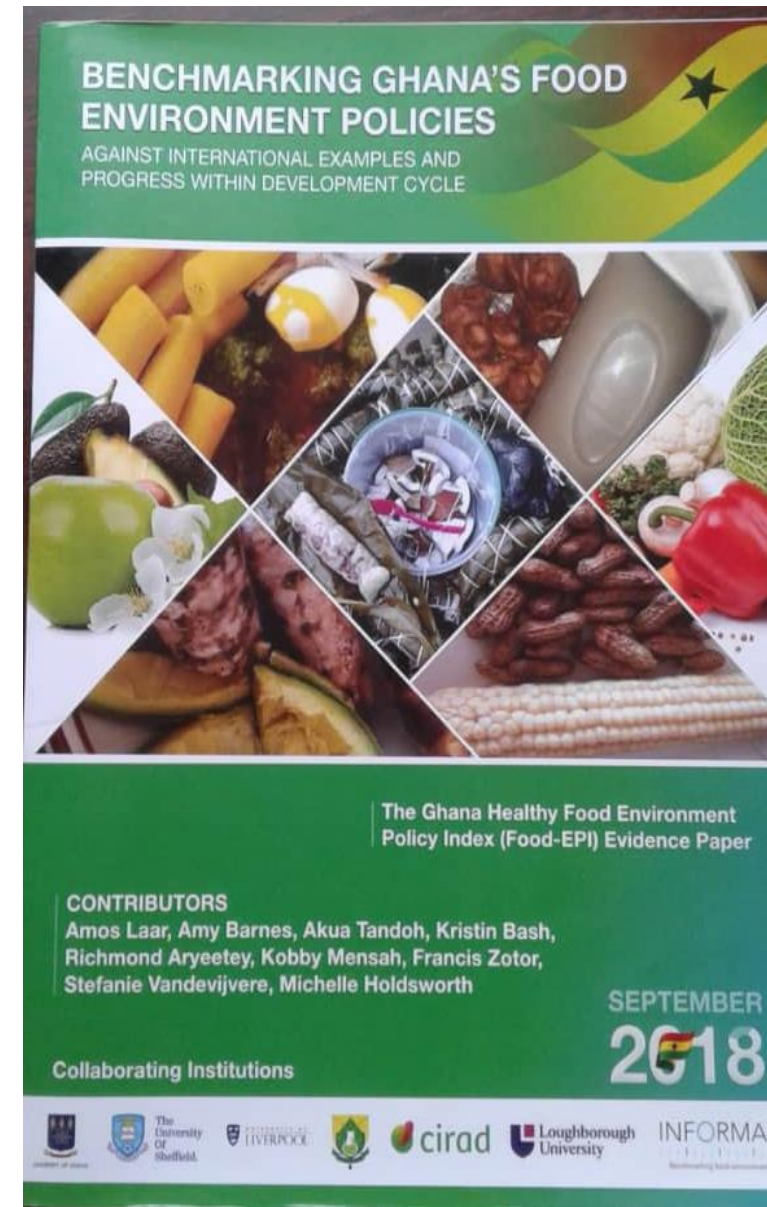
Prioritise

- Identified actions subsequently prioritised (online) by the expert panel

  - taking account of perceptions of relative **importance** (i.e. need, likely impact, equity) and **achievability** (i.e. level of acceptability, affordability, feasibility, cost-effectiveness).

How well did expert panel rate their governments against international best practice ?

Ghana performing **very well ('high') in only 1/44 indicators:**

-restricting marketing of breast milk substitutes

Ghana performing **relatively well ('medium') in 8/44 indicators (2 policies):**

-ingredient lists/nutrient declarations

-setting standards for maximum fat contents in some meats

'low' or 'very little' implementation
35/44 indicators

11

Identify-recommend-prioritised policy actions for creating healthier food environments in Ghana.
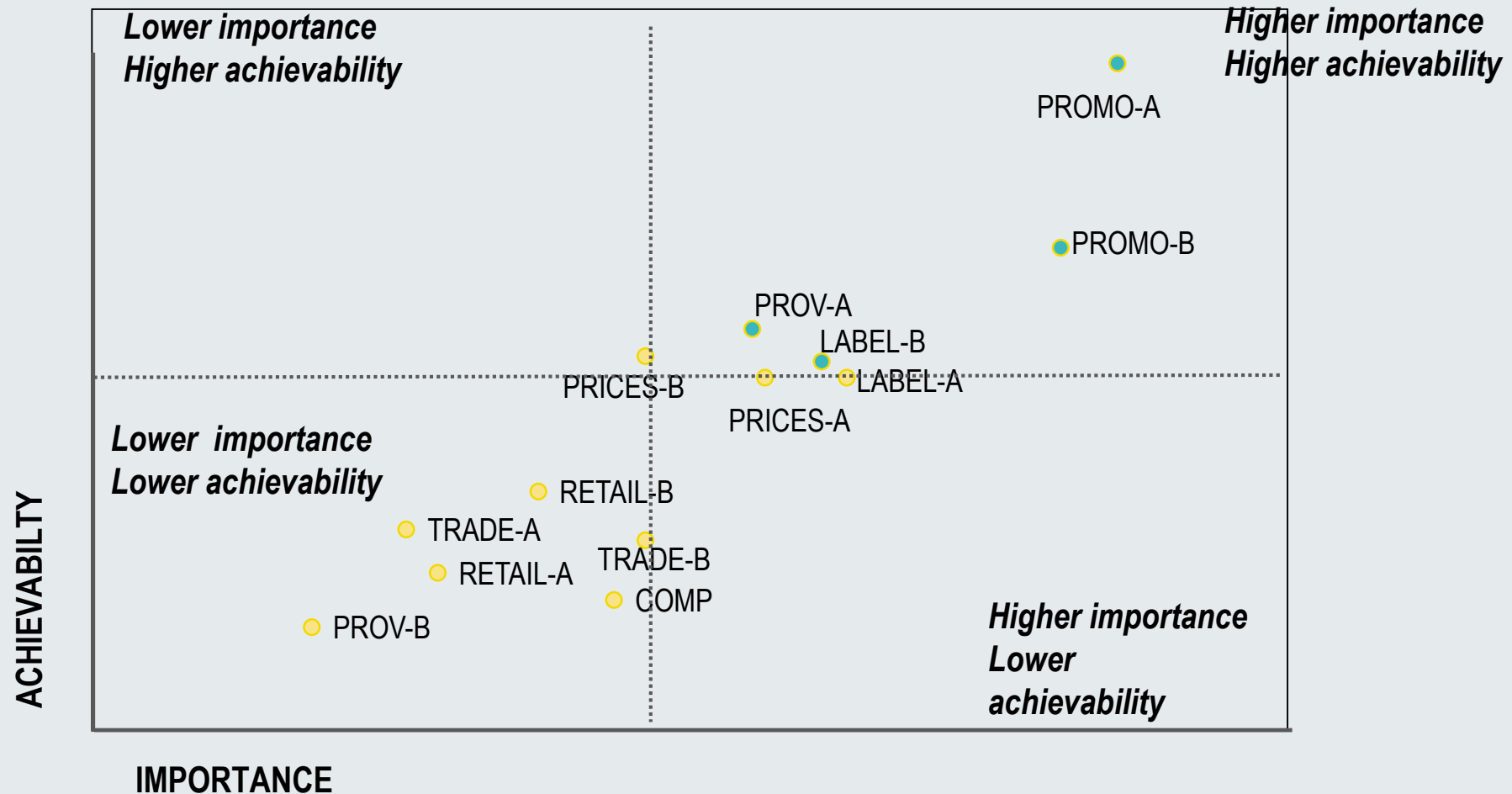
Identify-recommend-prioritised infrastructure-support actions for creating healthier food environments in Ghana.
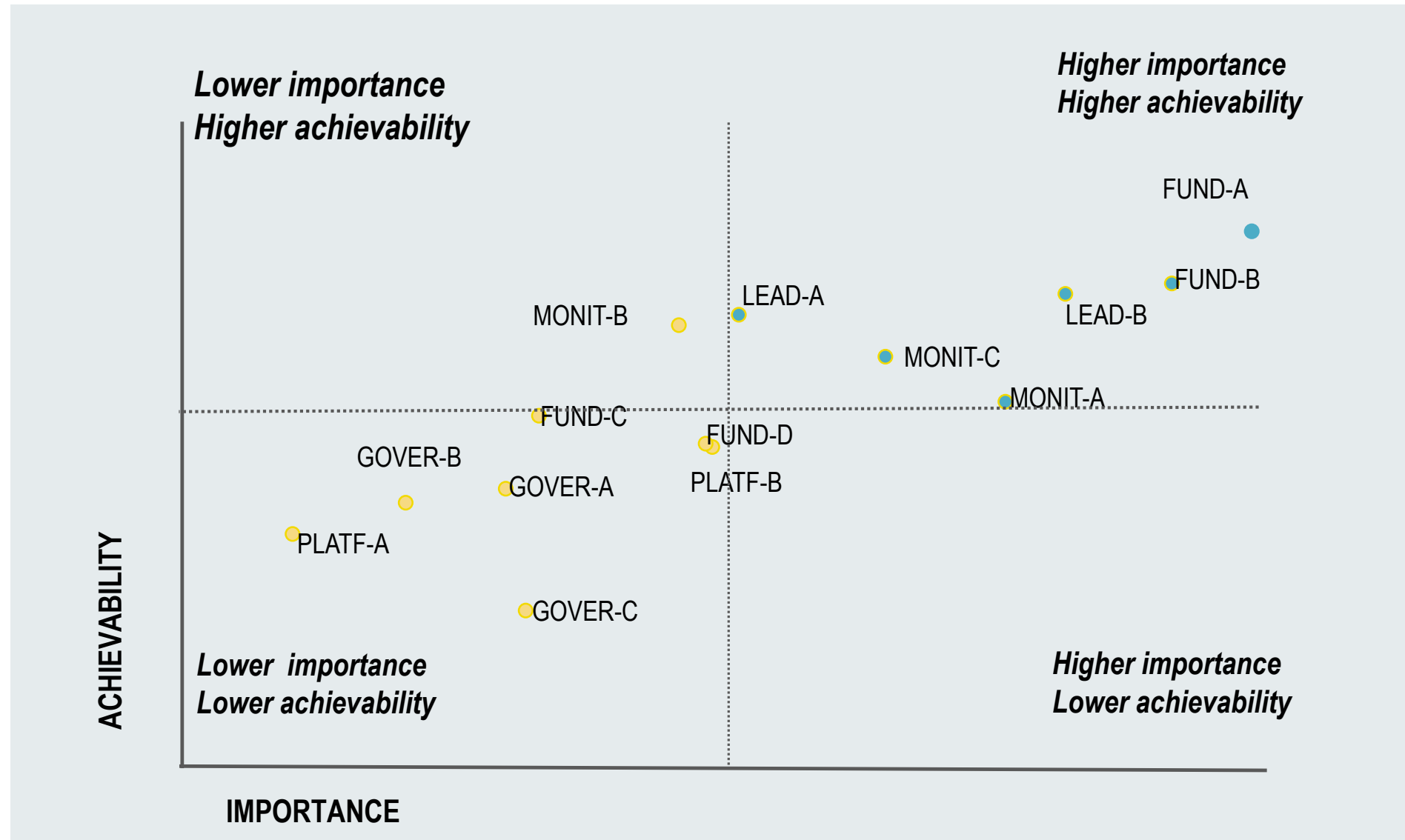
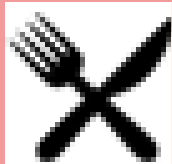# Top policy priorities- high importance and feasibility/achievability
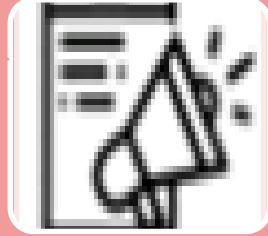
Legislation to control promotion/advertising of unhealthy food and beverages in and around schools

Legislation to control advertising of unhealthy food and beverages in the media

Government support for nutrition advocates for nutrition labelling

Compulsory healthy meal planning for school caterers

Top priorities- high importance but less feasible

Mandatory front of pack labelling scheme

Subsidise cost of healthy foods

Funding acknowledgement