



*11<sup>th</sup> June 2024*

To the attention of: H.E. Giorgia Meloni  
President of the Council of Ministers  
Italy

Cc: H.E. Joe Biden  
President  
United States

H.E. Fumio Kishida  
Prime Minister  
Japan

H.E. Emmanuel Macron  
President  
France

H.E. Olaf Scholz  
Federal Chancellor  
Germany

H.E. Rishi Sunak  
Prime Minister  
United Kingdom

H.E. Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister  
Canada

**Object: Obesity: A Strategic Priority for the G7**

Dear Representatives of the G7 Countries to the forthcoming Italy Summit,

On behalf of a rapidly growing community of scientists and researchers from diverse disciplines, as well as institutions, NGOs, and think tanks, we are writing to you ahead of the G7 Leaders' Summit on June 13-15 in Italy to urge for the inclusion in the agenda and the following adoption of concrete measures to combat obesity, overweight, and eating disorders.

Obesity is now recognized as a neglected syndemic that has very serious repercussions on public health and national health systems, social and interpersonal relationships, productivity and the global economy, profoundly affecting the mental and physical well-being of citizens. As the leading indirect



cause of mortality worldwide, by way of so-called noncommunicable diseases, it is imperative to intensify efforts to promote policies aimed at reducing obesity, focusing on approaches that enable citizens to adopt a balanced and sustainable lifestyle.

The issue of obesity, overweight, eating disorders, and more generally an unbalanced lifestyle, involves an increasing number of individuals in all regions of the world.

Globally, the total number of people living with obesity has exceeded 1 billion, comprising 159 million children and adolescents and 879 million adults. In 2022, among children and adolescents, the obesity rate was four times higher than in 1990. Among adults, it more than doubled in women and nearly tripled in men.

In Europe, 59% of adults and nearly one in three children (29% of boys and 27% of girls) are overweight or affected by obesity. Overweight and obesity are among the leading causes of death and disability in the European macro-area, and recent estimates suggest that they cause more than 1.2 million deaths per year, accounting for more than 13 percent of total mortality in the region under observation.

The World Obesity Federation predicts that if current trends do not change, by 2035 the majority of the world's population (51 percent, or more than four billion people) will be living in a state of overweight or obesity, and one in four people (nearly two billion) will be obese.

The problem of obesity and overweight does not only have ethical significance in terms of the health of citizens. In fact, its global economic impact will reach \$4.32 trillion in 2035, accounting for nearly 3 percent of global GDP, an impact comparable to that of COVID-19 in 2020.

The largest increases in obesity prevalence globally will mainly affect low- or lower-middle-income countries in Asia and Africa.

For the first time in human history, there is a real risk of reduced life expectancy, directly related to widespread weight gain in the population. This phenomenon is partly the result of improved socio-economic conditions and the increased availability of caloric foods, which, while a source of satisfaction, have contributed to the increase in body weight and thus to the onset of diseases associated with poor diets and unsustainable lifestyles.

However, the problem of obesity cannot be attributed solely to excessive calorie intake and poor nutrition, but is the result of an intricate mix of factors: diet and lifestyle (quality, quantity and frequency of calorie consumption, energy expenditure); other aspects of lifestyle (stress, sleep quality, emotional state, medication intake); socio-economic and relational factors (economic conditions and social dynamics); genetic and metabolic factors (genetic predispositions and individual metabolic variations).

Each of these macro-categories is influenced by additional, strictly individual, sub-categories. Therefore, approaching the problem of obesity requires personalization, taking into account the specific needs and circumstances of each individual.

Policies implemented to date, based on reducing consumption of individual nutrients and blanket approaches, for example, front-of-pack nutrition labelling systems, have not achieved the results promised. As was to be expected, these measures gained only superficial endorsements, more geared towards deluding citizens/consumers than towards stimulating their own critical consciousness and cultivating knowledge. The analysis of the data and the evidence of their failure underscore the urgency of revising policy approaches, shifting the focus from generalized, rushed solutions to more targeted and individualized prevention and treatment interventions. Moreover, these policies to date have been shown to foster unintended negative consequences for the economy, particularly for local



economies, society and culture. Specifically, they have proven detrimental to culinary diversity, local traditions, and citizens' freedoms.

The policies of governments and international institutions must urgently overcome ideological approaches that have so far generated only emotional and ineffective responses. It is time to radically reformulate public health strategies, focusing on the multifactorial complexity of the problem. Only by taking a multidisciplinary approach, merging different perspectives and knowledge, will we be able to come up with truly effective solutions. Fortunately, the technological development of the Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence, Quantum Physics, the leaps forward in personalized medicine, and, more generally, the evolution of the human, social, and natural sciences, now provide us with the indispensable tools to implement tailored solutions that meet the specific needs of each individual. These advances pave the way for us to fight this silent epidemic more effectively.

Adopting this new approach requires humility, active participation and an unchanging faith in the scientific process, accepting its inevitable failures as part of the path to success.

Bringing the problem of obesity onto the agenda is in line with the G7's goals that are of an ethical nature with respect to the individual and social well-being of citizens, an economic nature with respect to the consequent costs to citizens and national health systems and decreased productivity, and an environmental nature with respect to excess caloric production.

We will be sure to get proposals to you ahead of the G7 Ministers of Agriculture and Health, although the problem should involve a wide range of areas, starting with Education.

We remain at your disposal to discuss this issue in more depth.

Yours sincerely,

Pietro Paganini

President, Competere.eu

Michele Carruba

President, CSRO (Center for the Study and Research of Obesity)