

Public Health, Nutrition & Epidemiology 2019: Policy coherence, trade liberalization and obesity: A case study of New Zealand's trade objectives and development commitments in the South Pacific- Caroline Slevin- University of Edinburgh Medical School, UK

Caroline Slevin

University of Edinburgh Medical School, UK, E-mail: carolineslevin95@hotmail.co.uk

Abstract

Policy coherence is considered essential for credible and effective policies with its importance in global health highlighted by its inclusion in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17.14. Despite pledging to support the SDGs, New Zealand had failed to implement any monitoring, analytical or reporting systems to measure policy coherence by 2016. This has implications given its leadership position in the South Pacific, which is experiencing a Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) crisis, as it assists smaller island nations with development and imports essential goods. A literature review was conducted to investigate the significance of the relationship between trade liberalization and obesity in the South Pacific. This was followed by a thematic analysis of New Zealand's regional food, trade and development policies. The review found that trade liberalization has facilitated a nutrition transition with the entry of nutritionally-inferior food products to Pacific

nations, with reduced agricultural subsidies contributing to an increase in food-import dependency. The policy analysis indicates a lack of coherence exists between New Zealand's objectives to pursue trade liberalization and maximize export revenue with development commitments to reduce obesity in Pacific nations. The prioritization of economic objectives underpins the failure to achieve policy coherence in the South Pacific and New Zealand appears reluctant to accept responsibility for its contribution to the region's NCD crisis. Greater communication with island communities is needed, whilst monitoring and reporting systems must be implemented to guarantee coherence when developing future policies and to prevent a further deterioration in South Pacific NCD health outcomes.

This work is partly presented at 7th World Congress on Public Health, Nutrition & Epidemiology on May 15-16, 2019 held in Singapore