



20 May 2014 - Most of us probably know that anything fried won't qualify as a nutritious super food, but do you know just how dangerous an unhealthy diet truly is? "Unhealthy diets are now a greater threat to global health than tobacco. Just as the world came together to regulate the risks of tobacco, a bold framework convention on adequate diets must now be agreed," said UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter.

Indeed the growth of obesity in the world indicates that something is very off with our diet. "Obesity continues to advance - and diabetes, heart disease and other health complications along with it. The warning signs are not being heard," warned De Schutter. He underlines that, despite increasingly worrying signs and well-identified priority actions, the international community continues to pay insufficient attention to the worsening epidemic of obesity and unhealthy diets.

If it's become such a large risk, which means that the occasional trip to the local fast food place or a quick microwaved meal at the office between meetings doesn't exactly sum up the extent of the "unhealthy meals". Foods high in saturated fats, salt and sugar are some of the main culprits. These are often used in fast food meals, or are cheaper to buy at the supermarket than local or fresh produce. Therefore meals including these kinds of foods, even if home-cooked, remain very unhealthy.

In a world where [one in eight people](#) suffer from chronic hunger or food insecurity it seems almost oxymoronic that obesity is becoming a critical problem. The three [most obese countries](#) in the world are the USA, Mexico and New Zealand. Unsurprisingly, the Number 1 most obese country in the world is also the world's largest consumer, producer and exporter of fast food: America.

De Schutter proposes several methods for combatting rising obesity and the associated risks. He recommends targeting unhealthy foods by taxing unhealthy products, restricting fast-food advertising and regulating foods high in saturated fats, salt and sugar. At the same time he advises promoting healthier foods by overhauling agricultural subsidies, which make certain that certain ingredients are cheaper than others promoting unhealthy eating and supporting local food production so that consumers have access to healthier and nutritious foods.

Yet balancing the world's food scale, "will only work if the food systems underpinning them are put right," De Schutter added. "Governments have been focusing on increasing calorie availability, but they have often been indifferent to what kind of calories are on offer, at what price, to whom they are made available, and how they are marketed". In times of economic crisis, people turn to junk food because it's fast and inexpensive. But buying local, seasonal food and preparing meals in large quantities for the days ahead can actually come out to be less expensive. So fast foods may seem easier but in the end, junk is cheap.