Background and objectives: In Portugal there is a coexistence of high prevalence of obesity with high levels of food insecurity. Food insecurity may lead to the increasing of health inequalities, namely by an unequal distribution of obesity and other diet-related chronic diseases through the most vulnerable groups. This situation prompted the Portuguese Health Ministry to define the National Program of Healthy Eating as a priority program, which aims to improve the population’s nutritional status by promoting availability and physical/economic access to healthy foods thus creating conditions for all citizens to valorize, consume and integrate them into their daily routines.

Methods: Launched on March 2012, after consultation with partners and civil society, this is the first formal food and nutrition action plan in Portugal. Until that date, Portugal did not have a formal and integrated strategy.

Results: The strategy determined five objectives: (1) increase knowledge about food consumption and nutritional status of the population, its determinants and consequences (2) improve the consumer’s knowledge to make them able to do more informed decisions (3) improve the availability of certain types of foods, particularly in schools, workplaces and other public institutions (4) identify and promote integrated and crossed-actions with other society sectors that encourage the consumption of healthy foods and (5) improve the qualification of professionals who can influence knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in the food field. This strategy aims to combine economic growth with improving the nutrition situation and intends to integrate the local health regions and municipalities in a solid and structured nationally program, paying special attention to health inequalities.

Conclusions: This program follows the recent recommendations of the WHO and EC, and pretends to be a multisectorial program, involving stakeholders on healthy eating promotion, addressing the current challenges of the double burden of malnutrition and the health inequalities.

Key words: poverty, nutritional status, food strategies, households

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PORTUGUESE FOOD AND NUTRITION ACTION PLAN
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Key words: food and nutrition policy, health promotion, Portugal.