

A woman with sunglasses on her head, wearing a denim jacket, is scanning a bottle at a retail checkout counter. The counter has a screen displaying 'REWE' and '0.99 €'. In the background, there are shelves with various products and a sign that says 'Express Kassa 4'.

RETAIL ASSESSMENT 2025

Executive Summary



PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Modern food retailers have a strong influence over what people buy and eat. Through their product selections, promotions, pricing strategies, and store layouts, they shape what is available, affordable, and appealing to consumers. As these retail formats continue to expand globally—particularly across low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)—their role in shaping dietary patterns and nutrition outcomes is becoming increasingly important. This growth—most notably in urban areas—is accelerating a shift toward processed and packaged foods, often at the expense of traditional diets.

The global food retail landscape has transformed rapidly over the past two decades, with modern grocery formats such as supermarkets, hypermarkets, convenience stores, discounters, and warehouse clubs now dominating food purchasing in many countries. According to Euromonitor¹, modern food retail outlets grew by 65% in LMICs between 2017 and 2021, compared to just 5% in high-income countries (HICs). While this expansion has increased convenience and wider access, it has also coincided with alarming nutrition trends.

Noncommunicable diseases—now responsible for the majority of premature deaths globally—are increasingly driven by poor diets.² UNICEF’s Feeding Profits report (September 2025) revealed that the global prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents aged 5–19 years (9.4%) has now surpassed underweight (9.2%). Nearly 20% of children are overweight—double the share in 2000—with 81% of this burden now concentrated in LMICs.³ These trends underscore the urgency of leveraging retailers’ reach, marketing power, and product strategies to make healthier, more affordable, and sustainable diets the easy and desirable choice for all.

The [ATNi Retail Assessment 2025](#) examines how modern food retailers influence access to nutritious and affordable foods through their policies, commitments, and how these translate into the healthiness of their private-label portfolios, marketing practices and product pricing. It provides actionable insights for retailers, investors, policymakers, and consumer rights groups to help increase access to healthier, affordable diets for all.

The assessment analyzes **18 leading retailers and more than 18,000 private-label products across six countries—the United States, France, South Africa, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Kenya**—representing a sample of high-, upper-middle-, and lower-middle-income countries. Together, these retailers account for an estimated 35–70% of grocery sales through modern retailers in their respective markets, reaching approximately 340–370 million customers^a, illustrating their central role in shaping food purchases, dietary patterns and the strong influence they have on public health outcomes.

^a For the UMICs and LMICs, estimates of consumer reach are derived from: (i.) the estimated proportion of either the urban or adult population that visits modern retailers at least once a month (based on the best available literature); (ii.) the relative growth in modern grocery retail size since those estimates were made (EMI Data); (iii.) the number of retail sites per retailer (EMI Data), with adjustments for site type (0.75 for convenience stores, 1.0 for supermarkets, 1.5 for hypermarkets); and (iv.) assumed rates of overlap between retailers (Kenya: 40–60%; Indonesia, Philippines, South Africa 60–80%). A $\pm 10\%$ confidence range was then applied to the upper and lower bounds. For US and France, consumer reach was assumed to be 93–96% of the adult population.

METHODOLOGY

The ATNi Retail Assessment 2025 covers the top three leading grocery retailers in each country and integrates both quantitative and qualitative analyses across complementary research components:

- 1 Retail Environment Mapping:** Examines the size, structure, and evolution of food retail markets, including market share concentration and key trends.
- 2 Retailer Strategies and Performance:** Assesses corporate policies and commitments related to nutrition, including governance, strategy, and transparency.
 - **Retailer Profiles** that assess corporate policies and commitments related to nutrition, including governance, strategy, and transparency;
 - **Product Healthiness Assessment** that evaluates the nutritional quality of retailers' private-label portfolios using government-endorsed nutrient profile models and a policy-based approach to assess levels of food processing;
 - **Promotion Analysis** that examines promotional practices in weekly flyers to understand how retailers market healthier versus less healthy products.
- 3 Pricing and Affordability:** Compares the cost and affordability of healthier and less healthy food baskets across countries and retailers, adjusted for purchasing power parity and relative to average incomes.

- 4 Policy and Regulatory Landscape:** Maps existing policies—such as front-of-package nutrition labelling, fiscal measures, and marketing restrictions—and identifies gaps and best practices to incentivize retailers to support healthier food environments.

This report builds on ATNi's 13 years of global benchmarking, expanding from food manufacturers to the retail sector—a key link between supply and consumer demand. Though limited to three national retailers per country and focused on private-label packaged products, it offers a first-of-its-kind analysis across diverse income settings.

The methodology was developed with input from experts and reviewed by an independent advisory group. Research drew on secondary sources and targeted primary data collection—online across all countries and in-store in Kenya. Findings are contextualized within national policy frameworks, enabling both country-specific insights and cross-country comparisons to guide retailers, investors, and policymakers toward healthier food retail environments.



KEY FINDINGS

Healthier diets remain less affordable across all income contexts

Using the retail food basket approach, the assessment found that healthier baskets were between 10% and 60% more expensive than less healthy baskets across all retailers and countries. In 2024, the cost of a healthier basket ranged from USD 10.76 to USD 27.58 per person per day, compared with USD 8.74 to USD 20.84 for a less healthy basket.

- The lowest-cost baskets were observed in France (E.Leclerc), while the most expensive were in Kenya (Naivas).
- In high-income countries, both the healthy and unhealthy baskets accounted for less than 10% of

daily per capita income. In contrast, in LMICs, the cost of unhealthy baskets ranged from 36% to 117% of daily per capita gross national income (GNI), while healthier baskets were even less affordable, accounting for 53% to 154% of daily per capita GNI.^b

Even in high-income contexts, affordability is closely tied to inequity: low-income and minority households face persistent barriers to accessing nutritious foods, despite proximity to modern grocery stores.

^b This includes only food purchased from the three largest retailers, and does not include costs of foods purchased from informal markets, which represent the largest share of the market in LMICs

FIGURE 1
COST OF RETAIL FOOD BASKETS



The growing concentration and influence of modern grocery retailers are reshaping food environments.

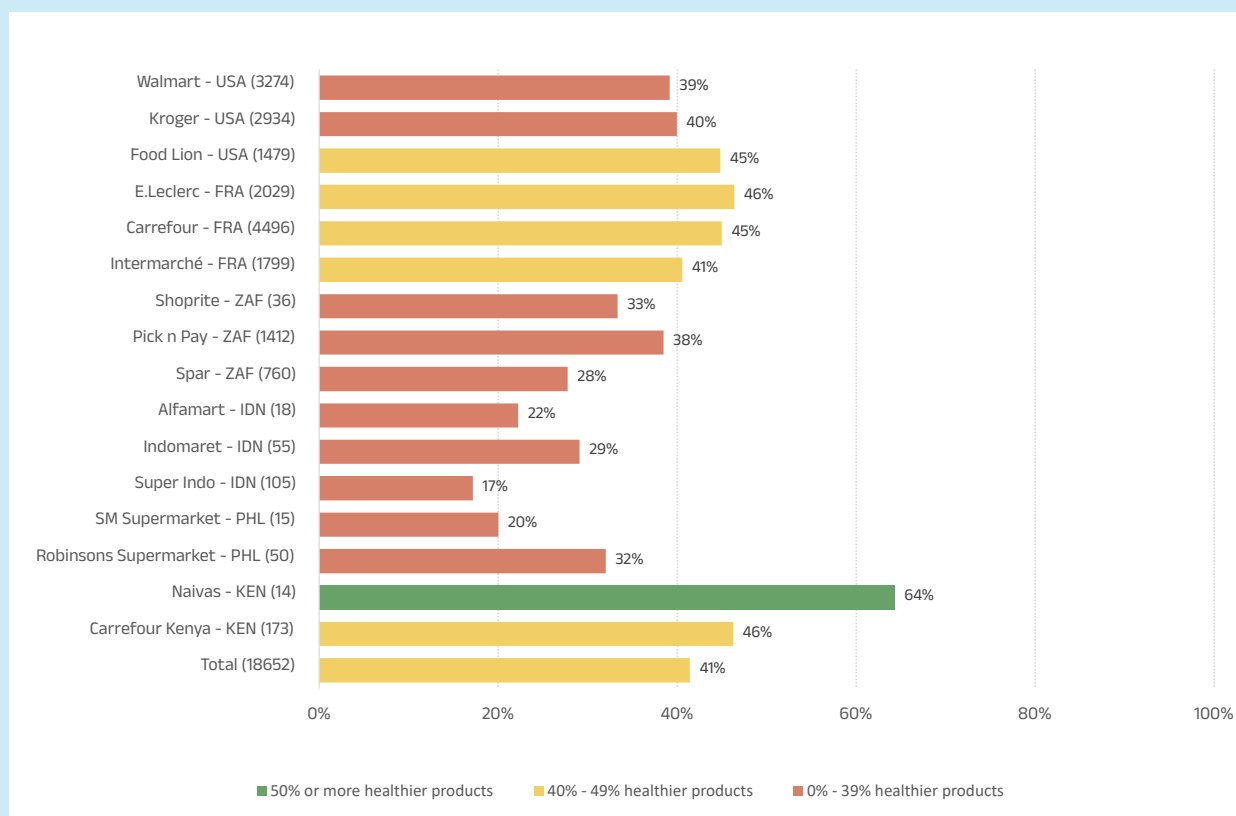
The expansion and consolidation of modern grocery retail are transforming food environments worldwide. In HICs, competition has intensified around processed and packaged products, while in LMICs, rapid retail growth is reshaping traditional diets and food systems. Private labels are central to this shift—accounting for up to 40% of grocery sales in mature markets and expanding quickly elsewhere. As retailers gain influence over pricing, placement, and promotion, their private-label strategies play a critical role in determining the healthiness and affordability of foods available to consumers.

Less than half (41%) of retailer private-label portfolios meet healthy standards (Health Star Rating ≥ 3.5 out of 5)

Across all countries, more than 18,000 private-label products from 18 leading retailers were assessed, revealing substantial variation across income settings. Retailers in HICs offer a much broader range of private-label products compared to those in LMICs, where the number of private-label items remains limited. Despite this difference in scale, the pattern is consistent: a minority of private-label products meet 'healthier' thresholds as defined by government-endorsed nutrient profile models.

In addition, compared to ATNi's Global Index 2024, retailers' private-label portfolios appear marginally healthier than manufacturers' overall product portfolios, with a mean HSR of 2.8 for retailers versus 2.4 for manufacturers.

FIGURE 2
PROPORTION HEALTHIER PRODUCTS OF PRIVATE-LABEL PORTFOLIOS CONSIDERED 'HEALTHIER' (HEALTH STAR RATING ≥ 3.5)



Retailer policies and commitments

Retailers are adopting various nutrition-related policies, typically centered on product reformulation, labelling, or marketing claims. However, few have developed comprehensive nutrition strategies with measurable, transparent targets. Definitions of what constitutes a 'healthier' product vary widely across retailers and it is not clear how this is linked to government-endorsed systems, and public reporting on progress remains limited.

86% of private-label products are HFSS and/or containing UPF markers^c

Across all six countries studied, more than 86% of private-label products were classified as high in saturated fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) and/or contained markers of ultra-processed foods (UPFs), such as added colours, flavours and non-nutritive sweeteners. Despite some retailer-led reformulation efforts, most private-label products remain low in nutrient quality and highly processed. This underscores the need for a more comprehensive definition of 'healthier' products, one that considers both nutrient composition and the presence of cosmetic additives.

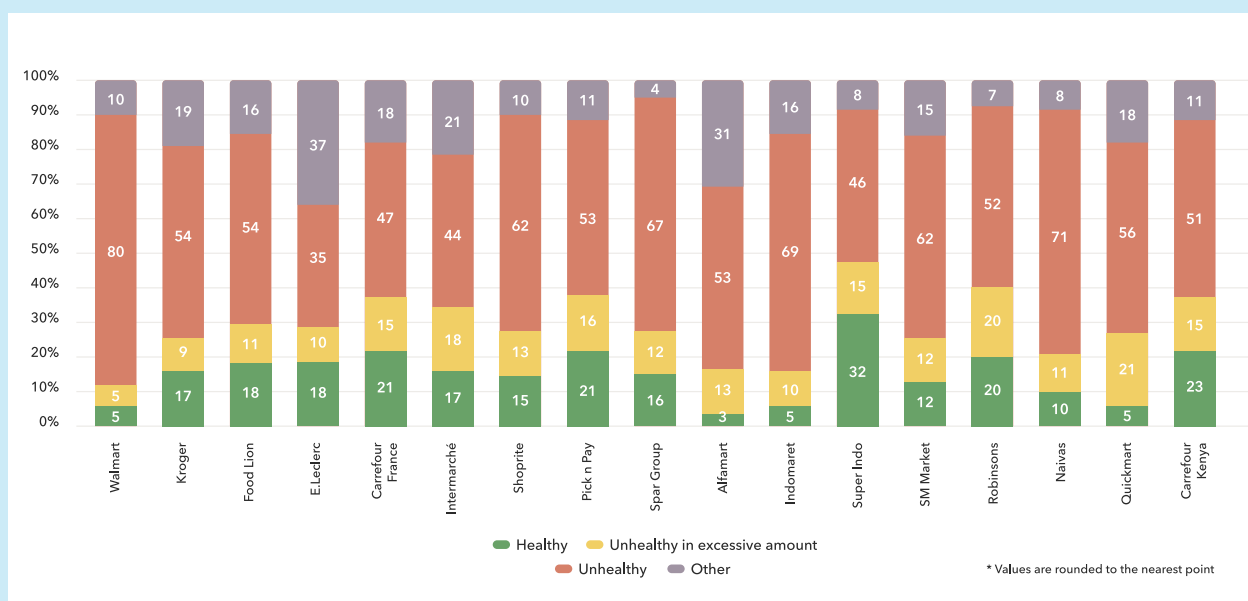
^c Using HFSS criteria and adding markers of UPF (colours/ flavours/non-nutritive sweeteners)



Promotions heavily favour less healthy products

Flyer analyses from all six countries show that promotional strategies disproportionately feature unhealthy products, particularly sugar-sweetened beverages, snacks, and ready-to-eat meals. For most retailers assessed, these products account for 50% to 80% of featured promotions. In contrast, healthier food groups—such as vegetables, fruits and legumes—appear only sporadically in promotional materials, usually occupying limited space and rarely featured as the main focus. This pattern is observed in both HICs and LMICs assessed. A few retailers in LMICs allocate a slightly higher share of healthier items, but overall unhealthy foods dominate promotional activities.

FIGURE 2
HEALTHINESS OF PRODUCTS FEATURED IN PROMOTIONAL FLYERS



Policies remain fragmented and largely voluntary

Regulatory approaches to healthier food retail environments remain highly fragmented across countries. In the two high income countries assessed, policies largely rely on voluntary measures and industry self-regulation. In the US there is an ongoing discussion around mandatory front-of-pack (FOP) labelling. Other measures such as using the term 'healthy' which now has a standard definition, and limits on marketing exposure and reformulation targets –remain voluntary. France has a voluntary interpretive FOP label (Nutri-Score).

Globally, while efforts to make front of package labelling mandatory have been ongoing for years, they face critical challenges including limited political will, and tensions with regional trade policies (e.g. mandatory FOP labelling standards would need to be introduced at the EU level for European countries, which limits any EU member from making such policies mandatory at the country level), as well as industry resistance.

The assessment found momentum for increased regulation in middle-income countries included in the retail assessment. Kenya has introduced a nutrient profile model and is developing complementary policy measures such as FOP warning labels and restrictions on marketing to children. South Africa and the Philippines have introduced a sugar sweetened beverage tax and, are also working on measures on restrictions marketing of unhealthy foods to children. The Philippines and Indonesia are advancing FOP labelling systems: the Philippines is developing a nutrient profile model to underpin these and other regulations, and Indonesia's mandatory Nutri-Level FOP labelling is scheduled for implementation from 2027. These policies are beginning to shape the retail environment by setting clearer standards for the labelling, marketing, and composition of products available in stores.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Retail Assessment shows that modern retailers have significant capacity to influence consumers food choices, yet their current policies and practices predominantly favour the availability and promotion of unhealthy products. Healthier food baskets remain relatively expensive, most of the products sold by retailers can be classified as unhealthy, promotions disproportionately feature these unhealthy products, and regulatory approaches targeting modern food retail remain fragmented and largely voluntary.

Companies, governments, investors and civil society need to work together to build the market for healthier foods. This requires multi-sectoral action:

- **Retailers** are already reshaping food environments through private-label offerings, pricing, and promotions. Integrating nutrition into core business strategies – such as reformulating private-label products, shifting promotions towards healthier products, and reporting on portfolio healthiness using internationally-recognized and government-endorsed nutrient profile models - can enhance transparency and accountability.
- **Governments** have introduced a variety of policies, from sugar-sweetened beverage taxes to mandatory front of package labelling, underpinned by a government-endorsed nutrient

profile. Measures that improve the food environment broadly – including a coherent package of fiscal measures which make less healthy food more expensive and healthier foods cheaper, mandatory, interpretive front-of-pack labelling, and restrictions on children's exposure to marketing of unhealthy foods - remain important, alongside policies that specifically target retail settings, such as restrictions on in-store promotions of unhealthy products. Together, these approaches can help create conditions that support consumers to make healthier choices.

- **Investors** can play a catalytic role by demanding transparency and accountability from the retail sector and ensuring nutrition is seen as “financially material” requiring that retailers report on key nutrition KPIs during annual earnings calls.
- **Consumer rights and advocacy groups** can also play a critical role by pushing for improved transparency, working with organizations such as Open Food Facts to improve citizens' access to reliable, comparable information about the foods they purchase and consume.

REFERENCES

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