



# Policy for Regulating Advertising of Unhealthy Food and Beverages on Out-of-Home Media Assets

Document Title:	Policy for Regulating Advertising of Unhealthy Food and Beverages on Out-of-Home Media Assets		
Document Ref. Number:	HLU001	Version:	V1
New / Revised:	New		
Publication Date:	October 2025		
Effective Date:	October 1st: for all new contracts December 31, 2025 (or until end of contract): For all existing contracts		
Document Control:	Healthy Living Unit		
Applies To:	<p>This policy applies to all entities licensed in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi that engage in the advertising or promotion of food and beverage (F&amp;B) products, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertisers and advertising agencies</li> <li>• Media owners and publishers</li> <li>• Food and beverage manufacturers</li> <li>• Restaurants, cafés, and hospitality operators</li> <li>• Retailers and grocery chains</li> </ul>		
Owner:	Healthy Living Unit		
Revision Date:	Three years from the publication date		
Revision Period:	September, 2028		
Contact:	<a href="mailto:healthyliving@doh.gov.ae">healthyliving@doh.gov.ae</a>		

## 1. Policy Purpose and Brief

1.1 Abu Dhabi is committed to building a healthier future for its citizens and residents, one where the environment they live in makes it easier to make healthier and more informed choices. Every day, they are exposed to a multitude of food and beverage advertisements that influence their dietary choices. This policy puts the health of people first - especially children - by limiting the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages that are contributing to the continually increasing prevalence of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. By establishing clear standards and fostering collective responsibility, the presence of health will be transformed in Abu Dhabi's public spaces.

1.2 This policy establishes a regulatory framework for the advertising of food and beverage (F&B) products across Out-of-Home (OOH) media assets within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. It responds to the growing public health challenge posed by the influence of unhealthy food and beverage advertising on dietary choices, with the overarching aim of reducing NCDs burden across the population.

1.3 Along with a wider range of initiatives and programs designed to tackle NCDs in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, this policy restricts the advertisement of unhealthy F&B products in OOH media assets and, as such, contributes to:

- 1.3.1 Decreasing overweight and obesity rates from the current levels (62% for adults and 36.8% for children)
- 1.3.2 Lowering the prevalence of NCDs, which affect 38.7% of total adults aged 18-69<sup>1</sup>
- 1.3.3 Enhancing public health outcomes and supporting economic sustainability by reducing healthcare costs and improving workforce productivity

1.4 This Policy's goals and objectives include:

- 1.4.1 Reduce public exposure to advertisements for unhealthy F&B products, particularly to children and adolescents
- 1.4.2 Promote healthier dietary choices and consumption habits across the population
- 1.4.3 Protect children from marketing strategies that promote high-fat, high-sugar, high-salt (HFSS), and ultra-processed food and beverage products
- 1.4.4 Encourage food and beverage (F&B) industry stakeholders to adopt healthier product formulations and responsible marketing practices
- 1.4.5 Strengthen accountability among advertisers, media owners, and content distributors to ensure full compliance with advertising regulations
- 1.4.6 Enhance enforcement through a coordinated, multi-agency framework involving regulatory, health, and municipal authorities

## 2. Definitions and Abbreviations

No.	Term / Abbreviation	Definition
2.1	F&B	An abbreviation for Food and Beverage, referring to any edible product or drink intended for human consumption
2.2	HFSS (High Fat, Sugar, Salt) Products	A category of food and beverage products containing elevated levels of fat, sugar, or salt, as defined by nutrient profiling models used to assess dietary health risk
2.3	Unhealthy Food and Beverages	Products classified as Grade C, D, or E by Abu Dhabi Public Health Centre (ADPHC) under the SEHHI nutritional profiling system. These are typically characterized by high levels of added sugars, saturated fats, or sodium per serving, and are considered unsuitable for frequent or promoted consumption - particularly by children or in locations frequented by vulnerable groups, such as schools, healthcare facilities, or community centers
2.4	Target Audience	A defined segment of the population to whom a marketing communication is directed, based on demographic, geographic, behavioral, or psychographic criteria
2.5	Advertisers	Entities that create and fund advertising campaigns for food and beverage (F&B) products, whether directly or through third parties. This includes, but is not limited to, restaurants, fast-food chains, food and beverage manufacturers, Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies, and marketing affiliates

2.6	Food Manufacturers	Businesses or organizations engaged in the production, packaging, and distribution of food and beverage products for consumer markets
2.7	Restaurants	Licensed establishments that prepare and serve food to consumers for immediate consumption. This includes quick service restaurants (QSRs), fast-food outlets, casual dining venues, food stalls, food trucks, and fine dining establishments
2.8	Media Outlets	Entities involved in the creation, placement, distribution, or display of OOH advertising. This includes creative agencies, media planning and buying firms, media owners, publishers, and operators responsible for physical, electronic, and/or digital advertisement installations
2.9	Out-of-Home (OOH)	Media assets are advertising placements located outside of the home, designed to reach consumers while they are on the move. Advertisements on outdoor OOH assets are currently regulated by the Department of Municipality and Transportation
2.10	Public Spaces	Any location accessible to the general public, whether by foot, vehicle, or public transport. This includes streets, parks, outside of shopping malls, transit hubs, and any site where advertising is publicly visible (e.g., billboards, building facades, lamp post banners, bus stops, taxis, or delivery vehicles)
2.11	Exposure	<p>The extent to which a target audience encounters a marketing communication. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach: The proportion of the target population exposed to a message</li> <li>• Frequency: The average number of times an individual is exposed to the message within a defined time period</li> </ul>
2.12	Power	The degree to which a marketing communication effectively influences its intended audience. Power is shaped by the creative approach, visual elements, emotional appeal, and persuasive techniques used
2.13	SEHHI	An Arabic word that means “Healthy”, SEHHI is a food program provided by the Abu Dhabi Health Public Health Centre as a service that guides the community in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to eat healthy food. The program aims to encourage and support healthy food consumption as part of the Emirate's vision of a healthier community, and to empower and improve eating habits and healthy food choices. Included in SEHHI guidelines is the food and beverage grading system (SEHHI Spectrum Based Classification for food and beverages)

### 3. Policy Content

3.1 Only food and beverages that meet high nutrition standards will be permitted to be advertised in public spaces (Out of Home Media Assets). This contributes to ensuring the people of Abu Dhabi, including children, have limited exposure to unhealthy food and beverage advertising.

**3.1.1 Advertisements permitted:** OOH F&B product advertisements meeting SEHHI grade A and B standards are permitted. The F&B product advertised must be at least 30% of the advertisement size

**3.1.2 Advertisement not permitted for display:**

**3.1.2.1** OOH F&B product advertisements meeting SEHHI grade C, D, and E standards (defined in section 1) are not permitted for display across all OOH media formats and public spaces

**3.1.2.2** OOH F&B brand advertisements (i.e., brand logo without any F&B products) alone are not permitted to be displayed across all OOH media formats and public spaces

Table 1: Requirements of this policy for different types of advertising

Company / Advertisement	Ads of F&B products meeting SEHHI grades A & B standards	Ads of F&B products meeting SEHHI grades C, D, & E standards	Brand-only advertising
Advertisement for F&B outlet	Permitted if F&B product(s) content is at least 30% of total advertisement size	Not Permitted	Not Permitted

### 3.2 FOOD AND BEVERAGE SEHHI SPECTRUM-BASED CLASSIFICATION

3.2.1 The SEHHI system uses a spectrum-based classification to regulate food and beverage products based on nutritional standards set by the Abu Dhabi Public Health Centre (ADPHC). Each food and beverage item is assessed across several nutrient categories, and its final grade is determined by the lowest scoring category

3.2.2 To illustrate, even if a product qualifies for SEHHI grade A in most areas, but scores a grade E in total fat, it will be classified as SEHHI grade E overall. This approach ensures that one healthy aspect of a product does not outweigh a serious nutritional concern. See further details in Fig. 1 and Fig 2.

3.2.3 Calories targets (Kcal per image, e.g. <700 Kcal for 'A') combine the calorie total of all components in the meal/dish proposed for advertising, including main part, protein part, side dishes, drinks, sauces etc.

3.2.4 Total fat and saturated fat values are made excluding natural fats contributed by fish, lean chicken, lean red meat, eggs, medium fat, partially skimmed or skimmed cheese, avocados, nuts, legumes and seeds.

3.2.5 Sugar limits shall consider the total sugar of each component in the meal/dish proposed for advertising (not just 'added sugar')

3.2.6. The limits in this policy for total fat, saturated fat, total sugar and sodium will consider the weighted contribution of each meal component for the final determination of the meal g/100g and comparison to the A, B, C, D and E limits.

3.2.7 Accurate application of these calculation rules require that the advertiser provides sufficient information about each individual food item in the advertisement including (for each item)

- Weight (g)
- Total calories (kcal)
- Total Fat
- Saturated Fat
- Total Sugar (e.g. natural and added sugars)
- Total Sodium

3.2.8 These requirements are only suitable for meals/dishes which contain multiple components as defined by the SEHHI standard (A meal includes at least three components, the protein part of the meal, the carbohydrate such as pasta, rice or starchy vegetables like corn, potato, sweet potato, the vegetables part, and the sides, which includes beverages, salad dressing and fruit).

3.2.9 For the assessment of individual foods/beverage items such as those found in the ADS-037-2023 Abu Dhabi Specifications for food classification intended to be marketed to children\* will apply.

- \* English version:  
<https://jawdah.qcc.abudhabi.ae/en/Registration/QCCServices/Services/STD/ADS/ADS-037-2023-En.pdf>
- \*Arabic Version:  
<https://jawdah.qcc.abudhabi.ae/en/Registration/QCCServices/Services/STD/ADS/ADS-037-2023-Ar.pdf>

3.2.10 An adjudication process will be put in place to review food and beverage items that do not clearly fit the standard grading criteria. Additionally, the grading thresholds in this policy may be updated over time to reflect changes in international benchmarks, scientific evidence, and expert guidance, ensuring continued alignment with global health standards.

### 3.3 INDUSTRY IMPLICATIONS

3.3.1 This policy encourages businesses to reformulate their products and meals to meet the SEHHI A or B grade criteria, improving public health by promoting healthier food.

Table 2: Responsibilities of media outlets and advertisers

Entity	Responsibilities
Media Outlets	Verify ad compliance prior to display through approvals from QCC; non-compliance results in ad removal and penalties
Advertisers	Ensure advertised F&B products meet permitted nutritional standards as defined in this policy (see section 3.4, fig. 1)



### 3.4 ADVERTISING APPROVAL PROCESS FOR OUT OF HOME ADVERTISEMENTS RELATING TO FOOD AND BEVERAGES

10.1 All F&B ads must be reviewed by QCC to ensure meeting SEHHI grades A or B compliance as a prerequisite for subsequent submission to DMT for final required approvals before advertising takes place

10.2 Approval from QCC is contingent on meeting the requirements set out in Figure 1.

10.3 All outdoor food and beverage billboards require permits from the Department of Municipalities and Transport, and the advertiser/media operator must follow the processes outlined in the guide for the executive regulations of Law No. (2) of 2012 (Advertising Billboards).

10.4 Full details of the approval process and the relevant entities are included in Annex 1; including point of contact, submission links/portals, and SLAs

Figure 1: Breakdown of SEHHI classification for food and beverages

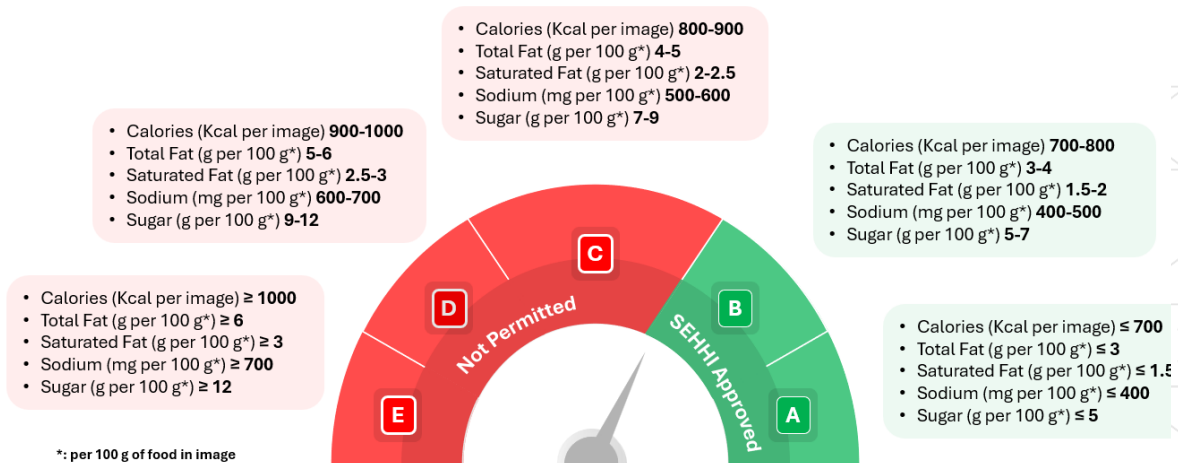
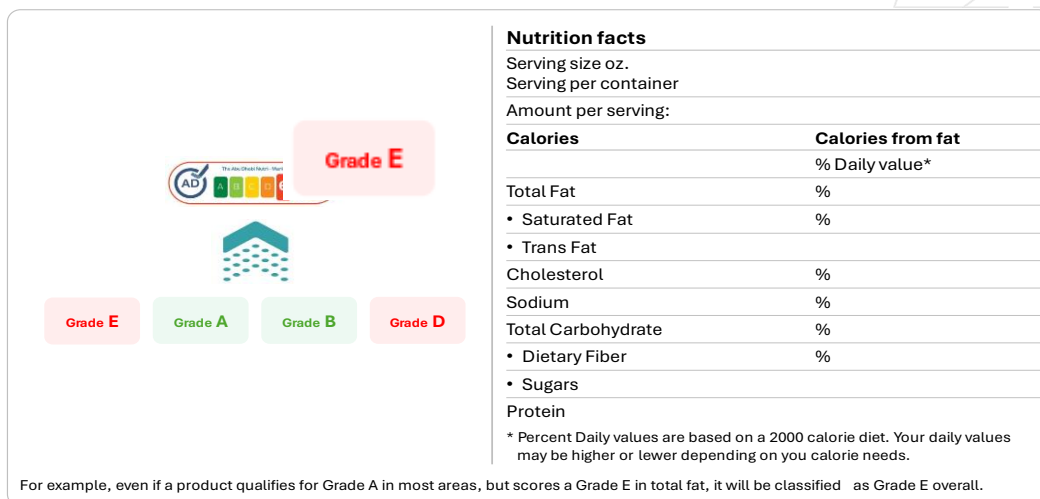


Figure 2: Example of overall classification



\*Aligned with Abu Dhabi Specifications for SEHHI Program (ADS 13/2025)

#### 4. Policy Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Effective implementation of this policy requires an integrated, whole-of-government approach, each within their scope.

Stakeholder name	Stakeholder Key Role	Responsibility
Department of Health (DOH)	Regulator for health	The regulative body of the Healthcare Sector in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, Established based on law No. (10) of 2018
Department of Economic Development (DED)	Regulator of business licenses	Imposes disciplinary actions including but not limited to fines, license suspensions revocation for non-compliant entities
Department of Municipalities and Transportation (DMT)	Regulator of public spaces	The approval issued by the relevant municipality for billboards in accordance with the provisions of the Executive Regulations of Law No. (2) of 2012 (Billboards) and the guidance manual (including advertisements in outdoor public places and excluding indoor advertisements)
Abu Dhabi Media Office (ADMO)	Regulator of media content	Issues content management guidelines for advertising/media content in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi
Abu Dhabi Public Health Center (ADPHC)	Regulator of nutritional guidelines	Defines and regulate criteria for healthy and unhealthy F&B products and brands
Quality and Conformity Council (QCC)	Publisher of standards and certification processes	Publishes standards and develops certification processes for F&B advertise as per Abu Dhabi Public Health Centre (ADPHC) and working group criteria

#### 5. Policy Scope of Implementation

5.1 This policy applies to all entities licensed in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi that engage in the advertising or promotion of food and beverage (F&B) products, including but not limited to:

- Advertisers and advertising agencies
- Media owners and publishers
- Food and beverage manufacturers
- Restaurants, cafés, and hospitality operators
- Retailers and grocery chains

5.2 The policy governs all Out-of-Home (OOH) media assets located within Abu Dhabi Emirate and regulated by the Department of Municipalities and Transport (DMT). Example of such assets include but are not limited to:



Table 3: Application of policy for different types of advertising

Category	Advertising signs
Category 1 - Billboards	Unipole
	Megacomm
	Rooftop
	Wall
	Construction (Hoarding)
	Digital
Category 2 - Flags or Street Banners	Flags and Street Banners
Category 3 - Advertisements in the Right of Way	MUPI's
	Pole Signs
	Bridge Signs
Category 4 - Roadside Furniture Advertising	Bus shelters and benches
	Other non-roadway related objects like trash bins and kiosks
Category 5 - Mobile (Moving) Advertising	Vehicles currently used for these purposes in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and neighboring communities include
	Cars
	Trucks
	Buses
	Motorcycles
	Boats
	Airplanes
Category 6 - Miscellaneous Advertising	Product replicas
	Balloons

## 6. Exempted from Policy Scope

6.1 OOH assets not regulated by DMT such as indoor assets (e.g., banner advertisement inside a mall)

## 7. Enforcement and Compliance (Consequences/sanction of not applying policy by related stakeholder)

7.1 From the effective date of this policy, no new OOH ads for F&B products meeting SEHHI grades C, D, or E standards as defined herein are permitted outside the exception permitted in 7.3.

7.2 Failure to comply with the provisions of this policy will result in the imposition of fines and/or penalties related to Law #2 of 2012 related to the General Appearance Law of Abu Dhabi.

7.3 Existing OOH advertising contracts F&B products meeting SEHHI grades C, D, or E standards that were signed or licensed by the DMT are given a grace period to accommodate the new policy until December 31, 2025, or until end of contract – whichever is later.

7.4 Each Government entity involved would monitor and implement sanctions based on their own scope and mandate.

## 8. Monitoring and Evaluation (Key success factors)

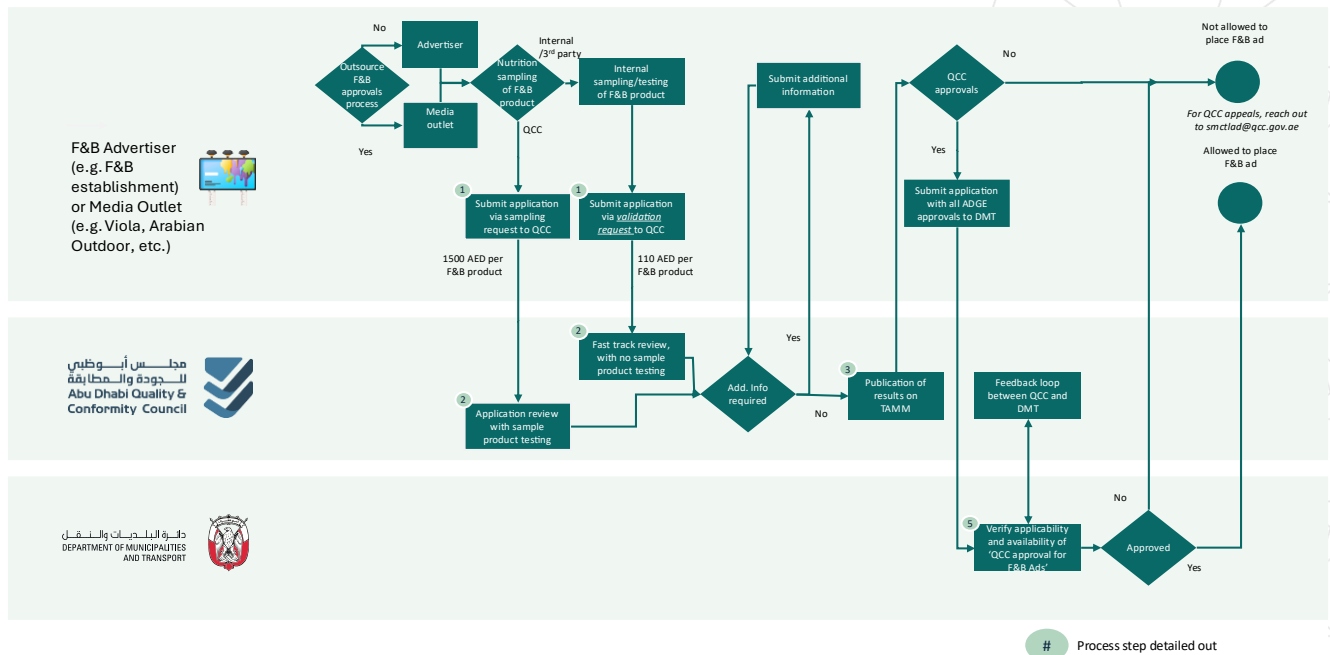
8.1 A monitoring and evaluation plan is in place to assess the effectiveness and outcomes of this policy and, if necessary, adopt changes to ensure continuous improvements. The principal metric to be monitored is the percentage of Abu Dhabi's out-of-home ads are for unhealthy F&B products. This is expected to fall immediately on policy activation, with gradual tapering towards zero as existing contracts run their course. This will be monitored through data provided by DMT routine collection through their mandatory approvals process.

8.2 Also monitored to assess policy impact will be the percentage of out-of-home adverts which feature compliant i.e. healthy products. Data to verify this will be sourced from DMT.

## 9. References

No.	Reference Date	Reference Name	Relation Explanation / Coding / Publication Links
1	2024	Abu Dhabi Department of Health – Disease Registry Data (2024)	Internal DOH data
2	2021	Obesity Reviews	<a href="https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/obr.13386?msocid=2f05a5b4bde261e41bccb04cbc016084">https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/obr.13386?msocid=2f05a5b4bde261e41bccb04cbc016084</a>
3	2024	NESTA	<a href="https://blueprint.nesta.org.uk/intervention/restrict-advertising-of-hfss-products/">https://blueprint.nesta.org.uk/intervention/restrict-advertising-of-hfss-products/</a>
4	2022	PLOS Medicine	<a href="https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1003915">https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1003915</a>
5	Accessed 2025	NIHR School of Public Health Research	<a href="https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/news-and-events/impact/impact-case-study-junk-food-advertising-tfl/#:~:text=SPHR%20researchers%20undertook%20an%20evaluation%20of%20this%20policy,of%20HFSS%20foods%20and%20food%20purchasing%20in%20London.">https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/news-and-events/impact/impact-case-study-junk-food-advertising-tfl/#:~:text=SPHR%20researchers%20undertook%20an%20evaluation%20of%20this%20policy,of%20HFSS%20foods%20and%20food%20purchasing%20in%20London.</a>
6	2018	Review of Economic Studies (2018) 85, 396–436-	<a href="https://academic.oup.com/restud/article/85/1/396/3108825">https://academic.oup.com/restud/article/85/1/396/3108825</a>
7	2023	WHO recommends stronger policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing	<a href="https://www.who.int/news/item/03-07-2023-who-recommends-stronger-policies-to-protect-children-from-the-harmful-impact-of-food-marketing">https://www.who.int/news/item/03-07-2023-who-recommends-stronger-policies-to-protect-children-from-the-harmful-impact-of-food-marketing</a>
8	2019	Governmental policies to reduce unhealthy food marketing to children	<a href="https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7528677/pdf/nuz021.pdf">https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7528677/pdf/nuz021.pdf</a>

## APPENDIX 1: Overview of application approval process:



### 1. **F&B Company / Advertiser: Application submission for F&B OOH Ad to QCC:**

- **Action:** Initiate the formal compliance process with QCC by submitting the complete application package to the QCC
  - If internal product sample testing completed, submit fast tracked application via: [TAMM - Request for Laboratory Testing --> Product Testing Request – Label Evaluation](#)
    - A. Draft of the F&B advertisement
    - B. Nutritional profile of each F&B product within the advertisements
    - C. Declared justification of compliance with nutritional limitations
    - D. Reference to F&B product at point of sale (e.g., menu item at restaurant) for audit purposes
    - E. Pay service fees (~110 AED per product) through TAMM portal
  - If sampling or testing is required, submit application via visiting the Central Testing Laboratory Customer Service to submit the sample for testing (~1500 AED per F&B product)
  - Point of Contact: [smctlad@qcc.gov.ae](mailto:smctlad@qcc.gov.ae)

### 2. **QCC: Application Review and Sample Product Testing to SEHHI Nutritional Criteria:**

- **Action:** QCC will review the submitted application and verify the nutritional data provided
  - Review process includes:
    - A. QCC process reviews nutritional profile for each product and validate/invalidate the meal compliance
    - B. Raise questions / request further validity / need for follow-up proof
    - C. If required, conduct audit/meal sampling of product referenced at point of sale
    - D. If sampling required, QCC will inform the advertiser

- If exception requested in application submission, QCC may seek additional ADPHC guidance before approval
  - **Expected QCC Turnaround time:** 15 working days
- 3. **QCC: Publication of Certification Results as Required by DMT:**
  - **Action:** QCC will officially communicate the results to F&B company / Advertiser via TAMM and email with the test report. The test report will be broken down by products which are:
    - "Approved" for advertising, meeting Grade A or B criteria
    - A "justification for ineligibility for advertisement" if products fall into Grade C, D, or E, outlining the specific nutritional reasons
  - **Appeals Process:** For any appeals or clarifications, advertiser/media outlet can reach out to [smctlad@qcc.gov.ae](mailto:smctlad@qcc.gov.ae)
- 4. **F&B Company / Advertiser: Submit OOH Ad Approval Application Package:**
  - **Action:** Prepare and submit the application for the Department of Municipalities and Transport (DMT) for the QCC approved meals for advertisement. Application to include:
    - Submit application through [TAMM Portal: Approve Advertising Content](#)
    - Attach the QCC report with approvals for the F&B products to be campaigned
    - Attach all other approvals required by DMT
    - In case of clarifications (OR) At times when the portal is under maintenance / not working appropriately, the submission of content can be done via email to the respective municipality where the asset is located. Email IDs are:
      - A. For asset in jurisdiction of Abu Dhabi Municipality: [mpco@adm.gov.ae](mailto:mpco@adm.gov.ae)
      - B. For asset in jurisdiction of Al Ain Municipality: [municipal.contracts@aam.gov.ae](mailto:municipal.contracts@aam.gov.ae)
      - C. For asset in jurisdiction of Dhafra Municipality: [municipalcontracts@drm.gov.ae](mailto:municipalcontracts@drm.gov.ae)
- 5. **DMT: Verify Applicability and Availability of 'QCC Approval for F&B Ads':**
  - **Action:** DMT will review the application and will ensure all the appropriate approvals are included (including QCC certification for F&B products)
    - If required, DMT engages with relevant entities to verify submission (e.g., feedback loop with QCC)
    - DMT grants or deny final approval for the OOH advertisement
  - **DMT Turnaround time:** 1day
- 6. **F&B Company / Advertiser: Placement of F&B OOH Advertisement:**
  - **Action:** Upon receiving DMT approval, proceed with placing the OOH advertisement for the meal on the approved media assets