

THE INTERNATIONAL FOOD & BEVERAGE ALLIANCE'S COMMENTS TO THE UN INFORMAL INTERACTIVE HEARING ON NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES ON 16 JUNE 2011

The International Food & Beverage Alliance (IFBA), comprised of ten of the world's leading food and non-alcoholic beverage companies – The Coca-Cola Company, Ferrero, General Mills, Grupo Bimbo, Kellogg's, Kraft Foods, Mars, Nestlé, PepsiCo and Unilever – was formed because we wanted to help the world address the rising prevalence of NCDs and obesity, and to help consumers to achieve balanced diets and healthy lifestyles.

In 2008, our CEOs publically committed to the WHO to take actions in five areas to support the WHO *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*. These five commitments form the core of what we do:

- To reformulate and develop new products;
- To provide easily-understood nutrition information;
- To impose strict limits on marketing to children;
- To promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles; and
- To participate in public-private partnerships in national and regional efforts with governments, WHO, NGOs and other stakeholders that supports the goals of the WHO *Global Strategy*.

We also pledged to report publically and annually on our progress, and in March 2011 we released our second progress report.

IFBA's Contributions to NCD Prevention

The prevention and control of NCDs requires a “whole of society” approach and a concerted and collaborative effort by government, civil society and the private sector. The private sector has an important and unique role to play in addressing global health challenges, including in the workplace. As leaders in our industry, the steps we have taken since 2004 – and those we have further committed to take - are progressive and proving very effective as part of the broader efforts on NCDs and obesity. These efforts have been acknowledged by WHO, OECD, the U.S. Institute of Medicine, the CARICOM Council on Human and Social Development and others.

We have:

- reformulated tens of thousands of products and introduced healthier food offerings globally, virtually eliminating trans fats, reducing sodium and sugar, fortifying products with key micronutrients for developing markets and children with dietary deficiencies, and raising the whole grain content of food around the world;
- improved the clarity and information on product labels in easy-to-understand forms across all markets and in 2010, adopted a set of “Principles for a global approach to fact-based nutrition labeling” to help consumers make informed choices;
- imposed restrictions on marketing and advertising to children under 12 years of age, limiting how and what we advertise to children globally. Third-party monitoring studies of the impact of this approach - which is in line with the WHO “*Set of Recommendations on the Marketing of Foods and Non-alcoholic Beverages to Children*” – have demonstrated a significant change in the nutritional profile of products advertised to children *increasing* their exposure to products compatible with a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle and *reducing* their exposure to products high in fat, sugars and salt; and

- introduced workplace wellness programs to incentivize healthy lifestyles, improve employee health and productivity and reduce absenteeism and medical care costs, for the more than 1.2 million people employed by IFBA companies around the world.¹

Although we have taken significant steps to address NCDs, there is still more to do. We cannot underestimate the complexity of improving global nutrition: the role of consumer behavior – from motivating consumers to adopt healthier lifestyles and balanced diets to understanding the importance of consumer insights and taste preferences in promoting healthy eating – is often undervalued; the complex role of supply chains and commodity prices, farmers and retailers; the limitations of nutrition science, particularly in low- and middle-income countries; the challenges of switching ingredients or developing alternatives (e.g. sodium and saturated fat reduction strategies). Global environmental changes affect crop availability, the cost of commodities and affordability. Further progress in the prevention of nutrition-related chronic disease depends on collaborations across multiple sectors from agriculture to scientists to retailers and private to public for the effective development and distribution of packaged food.

Effective Multi-sector Strategies to Address Global Health Challenges

There is no single solution to improving dietary habits and increasing physical activity levels. This is a societal problem and requires a population-based and culturally relevant approach. It also requires cost-effective, high-impact interventions such as multi-sector partnerships and voluntary actions by industry.

IFBA companies have a successful history of partnering with governments, the scientific community, health care professionals, NGOs and civil society. For example, our collaboration with the UK government to voluntarily reduce the sodium content in our products has helped lead to a reduction in salt consumption by the population by approximately 10% between 2003 and 2008. Similar collaborations are underway in Australia, Canada, the EU, Latin America and the U.S. We are participating in programs to improve basic knowledge of nutrition and energy balance, including Health Canada's innovative "Nutrition Facts Education Campaign," designed to give Canadians the information they need to make informed food choices to maintain and improve their health. We have funded public health research around the world on initiatives that promote nutrition science and education, healthy lifestyles and strategies for the promotion of health and the prevention and treatment of NCDs. We are a member of the PAHO Partners Forum, which focuses on catalyzing action for multi-sector partnerships by facilitating the exchange of successful practices, building capacity and raising awareness.

Successful community-based NCD interventions require a "whole of community" approach and the involvement of all stakeholders. For example, the "Get Active" school-based edutainment program in India designed to raise awareness of the importance of balanced nutrition and to inspire regular physical activity is a partnership among the medical community, educational bodies, the NGO, the Swashrit Society and an IFBA member company. Launched in early 2006, the program has reached more than 3 million children in more than 200 schools in 10 cities. EPODE (Together Let's Prevent Childhood Obesity) is an integrated school- and community-based program, supported by several IFBA member companies, involving local politicians, teachers, health care professionals, sports instructors, school canteens, restaurants and parents to prevent

¹ Additional information can be found in the IFBA Progress Report 2009-2010 available at: https://www.ifballiance.org/sites/default/files/IFBA_Progress_Report_2009-2010.pdf

childhood obesity. Started in France in 2003, EPODE has demonstrated a downward trend in the prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity. The program now extends to nearly 1.8 million people in 167 French cities, 20 cities in Spain and 8 cities in Belgium.

We are committed to playing an active role in multi-stakeholder actions dedicated to the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of interventions for the prevention of NCDs. Together with government and civil society, our contributions to date, our commitments going forward and recommendations for the outcomes document can make a significant contribution towards addressing NCDs.

IFBA Recommendations of Specific Outcomes for Inclusion in the Outcomes Document:

- ***Governments to adopt a holistic and inclusive approach to integrate NCD prevention and control with other health and development goals***

NCDs, if not addressed expediently and effectively, have the potential to impose a high economic burden on society. This future economic burden can be mitigated with a proactive, multi-stakeholder approach to the prevention and control of NCDs. Governments must take an “all of government” approach, and involve ministries beyond the health sector - including finance, trade, agriculture and transportation - and development strategies and systems infrastructure.

- ***Collaboration among the “whole of society” – governments, civil society and the private sector***

Governments must also leverage multi-sector partnerships to inform policies and mobilize resources. The collective impact of industry, government and civil society is exponentially greater than the efforts of any single stakeholder. The WHO 2004 *Global Strategy* recognized this, and the OECD has said cooperation between governments and the food industry is the single most critical link in the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach.²

The private sector is an essential and willing partner in multi-stakeholder actions dedicated to the prevention of NCDs. As appropriate, and in the best interests of public health, we seek more consultation, bi-directional communication, joint research and inclusion in the public policy debate.

- ***Recognition of the private sector’s positive role in the prevention of NCDs, and particularly in addressing the unique needs of low- and middle-income countries suffering from the double burden of chronic disease***

We are committed to help in the prevention of NCDs through: 1) product reformulation and introduction of healthier food offerings, including reducing sodium and other key ingredients of public health concern, and fortifying foods with key micronutrients to address the dietary deficiencies of low- and middle-income countries; 2) the promotion of consumers’ understanding of energy balance and nutrition; 3) collaborative research; and 3) workplace wellness programs. We can also make a significant contribution by leveraging our core capabilities, such as consumer insights, supply chain logistics, and marketing expertise to promote balanced diets and healthy lifestyles.

² OECD. *Obesity and the Economics of Prevention: Fit not Fat*, (OECD Publishing, 2010), 235

- ***Science-based policies and standards***

Food policies and standards should be science-based and draw upon the findings of major scientific bodies, e.g. regionally, organizations such as the Institute of Medicine in the U.S., and WHO globally. The development and employment of nutrition science is considered a priority for IFBA companies. Collaborative research between the public and private sector, to develop safe and healthy products, will be of great benefit to consumers and society.

- ***Governments to develop a means to collect, monitor and evaluate data***

A means for Member States to collect, monitor and evaluate public health, dietary intake and physical activity in their respective countries is essential to establish a reliable baseline and to help governments develop multi-sectoral and culturally-relevant prevention strategies.

- ***A clear action plan for governments, the UN, WHO, civil society and the private sector***

The UN High-level Meeting can best contribute to addressing the problem of NCDs by encouraging Member States to adopt an inclusive and collaborative approach involving the “whole of society” and “all of government”, and by providing Member States with guidelines and recommendations to integrate NCD prevention and control into existing health and development goals, policies and systems which can be adapted to address national priorities and circumstances – similar to the approach taken in the WHO “Set of Recommendations on Marketing to Children” adopted by Member States in May 2010.

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