

GLOBAL FOOD AND BEVERAGE COMPANIES IN THE GCC RENEW AND STRENGTHEN THEIR VOLUNTARY PLEDGE TO RESTRICT MARKETING TO CHILDREN

Expanded scope to self-regulate marketing to children and harmonized nutrition criteria in line with EU pledge adopted by the signatories of the pledge

Dubai, UAE- 6 March, 2016. Global food and beverage companies based in the GCC, General Mills, Kellogg Company, Mars, Mondelēz International, Nestlé Middle East, PepsiCo, The Coca-Cola Company and Unilever, have launched an enhanced version of their existing GCC Pledge on Responsible Food and Beverage Marketing to Children.

Initially signed in 2010, the GCC Pledge is a **voluntary commitment** by the signatory companies to conduct responsible food and beverage marketing to children in reflection of their commitment to improve nutrition and to promote healthier lifestyles. As per the commitment all participating companies do not to direct any marketing communication to children below 12 years old, except for products that fulfil specific nutritional criteria based on sound scientific evidence.

The strengthening of this pledge comes as another step forward in self-regulation by these GCC based companies in addressing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). All eight companies are members of the International Food and Beverage Alliance (IFBA), a not-for-profit organisation in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC).

This enhanced pledge entails applying a set of harmonized nutrition criteria among the IFBA member companies based in the GCC, for the exclusive purpose of defining better-for-you options in the context of food and beverage advertising to children under twelve and specifically for the product categories covered. These criteria are in line with the same commitment made in Europe (<http://www.eu-pledge.eu/content/eu-pledge-nutrition-criteria>).

“As leading companies in the food and beverage industry, we recognize the magnitude of the challenge to address Non-Communicable Diseases in the GCC and we are contributing through this enhanced pledge to one aspect of the solution. More industry voluntary measures are being planned for the near future,” said an industry spokesperson in the GCC.

In addition, the companies will continue to not promote products in primary schools, except where specifically requested by, or agreed with, the school administration for

educational purposes, and only with products that meet the criteria. All IFBA member companies based in the GCC have also voluntarily adopted individual corporate policies to ensure that they are compliant with these commitments.

Demonstrating a strengthening of the criteria since its initial implementation in 2010, the pledge now covers marketing products across a wide range of platforms including websites, TV and print, which will extend to include radio, cinema, DVD/CD-ROM, direct marketing, product placement in children's media channels, interactive games, mobile and SMS marketing effective 31st December, 2016. Compliance with the pledge is audited by an independent agency.

As leaders in their industry, signatories of the pledge are looking at expanding the scope of this voluntary commitment to include more local companies in the future. Similar initiatives have been adopted in the European Union, the United States, Singapore, and Australia and have proven successful.

Responsible Marketing of Food & Beverages to Children is one of four commitments that IFBA member companies have made globally. The other commitments are: driving forward Product Formulation and Innovation, implementing Clear Nutrition Labelling, and Promoting Healthy Diets and Lifestyles. These commitments demonstrate the drive by these companies to support the World Health Organisation's *Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013-2020* and to play a role in addressing global health challenges.

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The International Food and Beverage Alliance:

The International Food and Beverage Alliance (IFBA) is a group of eleven global food and non-alcoholic beverage companies-that share a common goal of helping people around the world achieve balanced diets, and health, active lifestyles. IFBA is a non-commercial, non-profit making organisation, in special consultative status with UN ECOSOC. For more information about IFBA, please visit www.ifballiance.org

In January 2009, IFBA members based in the GCC, Kellogg Company, Mars, Mondelez International, Nestlé Middle East, PepsiCo, The Coca-Cola Company, and Unilever came together with the aim and objective of rolling out the global IFBA commitments across the GCC. In 2014 General Mills joined the group. As with IFBA our common goal is to help consumers in the GCC to achieve balanced diets and healthy active lifestyles. We believe that finding and implementing solutions to GCC public health challenges requires a whole-of-society effort and multi stakeholder collaboration. As with IFBA we are committed to doing our part and leading GCC industry in these efforts.

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