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### **Food Industry Seeks Pro-Health Partnership with Political Leaders**

MONTEVIDEO – The International Food and Beverage Alliance (IFBA) is calling on governments to show political leadership by working with the industry to improve consumer health, the organization’s secretary-general, Rocco Renaldi, said on Wednesday in an interview with EFE.

Renaldi, who traveled to Montevideo to participate in the World Health Organization’s World Conference on Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs), emphasized that the food and beverage industry is fully willing to engage collaboratively with states to promote production of healthy food.

Regarding the measures being taken by the 12 large companies that make up the IFBA to overcome NCDs, he highlighted product quality, the role of adequate diets, responsible advertising, providing clear information to consumers and healthy habits.

Renaldi insisted, however, that higher-profile political leadership and the resulting partnerships can be decisive in the battle against NCDs.

Since 2008, the IFBA companies have been committed to aiding the process through innovation and product improvements. “Each company has had to make a specific commitment about the improvement of products,” Renaldi said. Improvements “can be, depending on the type of product, sugar reduction, fat reduction, but also the increase of beneficial nutrients, for example, whole-grain fiber, etc.”

Producers are also taking into account “the control of portion sizes,” he said. “We have also committed to eliminating the use of artificial trans-fats in all products by the end of 2018,” Renaldi said.

“For too long, I think, the policies on NCDs, obesity, etc. have been driven by health policymakers a little bit in isolation. There is a need for a cross-government approach and there is a need for a cross-sector approach,” the Belgian added.

Making the United Nations 2011 Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases a reality can be done only “country-by-country with the leadership of the institutions,” he said.

The secretary-general said the IFBA signed an agreement with the Mexican Health Secretariat that includes specific actions to help reduce overweight and obesity and the diseases associated with those conditions.

“What we wanted to do in Mexico is create a national platform to bring to life these commitments and tailor them to the Mexican context,” Renaldi said. Diet is one of the “most important factors” in curbing NCDs, he said, adding that all products made by IFBA members “can be part of a healthy diet.”

In pursuit of giving “nutritional information to consumers through the label,” the IFBA has “a global policy on the indications of all the nutrients that should appear on the back of the product” as well as front labels that “indicate at least the energy contribution of the food,” Renaldi said.

Renaldi also said that the 12 IFBA members are committed to “a variety of programs” to promote healthy living. “We started with our employees to promote health in the workplace and also in the communities where we all live,” he said, noting that the 12 IFBA companies employ “around 3.5 million people internationally.”

In response to the Montevideo statement at NCDs, to be adopted during the conference, Renaldi said that the IFBA will reiterate its commitment to “implementing policies throughout Latin America.”