WN *Update*

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Big Food Watch

Latin American Presidents are listening

Access November 2012 Enrique Jacoby et al on Latin American law here
Access December 2013 BFW Fabio Gomes on Mexico soda tax here
Access this issue BFW Roberto de Vogli on deregulation and obesity here
Access this issue BFW ALANA Isabella Henriques on advertising to children here



Presidents of Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Enrique Peña Nieto, Michelle Bachelet, José Mujica, Dilma Rousseff. They are listening to alliances united in outrage against ultra-processed products

Big Food Watch convenor Fabio Gomes reports:

Big Food works transnationally. So must the public health and nutrition movement. What happens in one country is a signal to others. This is now happening throughout Latin America. *Big Food Watch* is proud to be part of the movement to restore and protect public health and public goods throughout the world. This means rational regulation of food supplies including restriction of ultra-processed products, the main cause of rocketing rates of obesity, by law.

Below is an open letter written to Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto from 35 public health nutrition leaders. *It is front page headline national news in Mexico.* It is organised by the social movement *Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria* including *BFW* network member *El Poder del Consumidor* (Consumer Power). Signatories include Benjamin Caballero, Shiriki Kumanyika, Robert Lustig, Graham MacGregor, Reynaldo Martorell, Carlos Monteiro, Dariush Mozaffarian, Marion Nestle, Barry Popkin, Boyd Swinburn, Ricardo Uauy and Walter Willett. *BFW* member signatories include Michael Jacobson, Patti Rundall, and myself.

Box 1

Open letter to Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto

'International experts warn of risks of new labelling in Mexico'. Access this letter as published in the Mexican national press in English here and in Spanish here

As specialists who sign this letter, we celebrate the implementation of a sugar-sweetened beverage tax in Mexico that serves as an example to combat the epidemic of obesity and diabetes. However, we are deeply concerned about the option of obligatory front-of-package labeling that your government will implement, since it is difficult to understand and uses criteria that contravene international recommendations and that represent a serious health risk for the Mexican public.

The labeling proposed by the Federal Commission for Protection against Sanitary Risks (COFEPRIS) (*Access it in Spanish here*), induces consumers to believe that a daily intake of 360 kilocalories (90g) of sugar is the 100% recommended daily intake, that is to say, 18 coffee spoons of sugar (measured by Mexican nutrition standards), which could contribute to worsening the epidemic of obesity and diabetes in Mexico. Since 2003, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a maximum tolerable daily added sugar intake of 200 kilocalories and has recently proposed a reduction of the maximum tolerable intake of added sugars to 100 kilocalories, equivalent to 5 coffee spoons.

We are surprised that this proposal, in a manner inappropriate to front-of-package labeling, sums added sugars (aggregated through industrial processes and/or in restaurants and homes) with natural sugars (naturally present in fruits, vegetables and dairy products), hiding the information about added sugars that are the most damaging to health from consumers.

This practice contradicts the WHO objective that seeks to reduce added sugar intake in the human diet in order to prevent the risk of non-communicable diseases. In this sense, this proposed labeling also contradicts the criteria expressed in the *Mexican National Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Overweight, Obesity and Diabetes*, which you announced last fall.

Mr. President, we believe that this new front-of-package labeling increases the risk of obesity and diabetes and could even nullify the very benefits of the sugar-sweetened beverage tax. Labeling should warn consumers of the risks of added sugar and not promote its consumption.

Dr. Kate Allen, World Cancer Research Fund International • Peter Baldini, World Lung Foundation • Dr. Martine Berger and Nicoletta Dentico, Heath Innovation in Practice • Dr. Benjamin Caballero, Johns Hopkins University • Geoffrey Cannon, School of Public Health, University of Sao Paulo • Larry Cohen, Prevention Institute • Anna Glayzer, Consumers International • Dr. Harold Goldstein, California Center for Public Health Advocacy • Dr. Terry Huang, University of Nebraska Medical Center • Dr. Michael F. Jacobson, Center for Science in the Public Interest • Bill Jeffery, Centre for Science in the Public Interest, Canada • Dr. Jeffrey P. Koplan, Emory Global Health Institute • Dr. Bridget Kelly, School of Health and Society, University of Wollongong, Australia • Dr. Shiriki Kumanyika, Co-Chair, World Obesity Policy and Prevention • Dr. Robert H. Lustig, Pediatrics, University of California, San Francisco • Dr. Graham MacGregor, Action on Sugar / Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine, Queen Mary, University of London • Dr. Reynaldo Martorell, Hubert Department of Global Health, Emory University • Dr. Carlos A. Monteiro, School of Public Health, University of Sao Paulo • Dr. Dariush Mozaffarian, Harvard University • Dr. Bruce Neal, University of Sydney • Dr. Marion Nestle, New York University • Dr. Barry M. Popkin, School of Public Health, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill • Dr. Mike Rayner, University of Oxford, UK • Dr. Jeff Ritterman, Physicians for Social Responsibility • Patti Rundall, Baby Milk Action & International Baby Food Action Network • Dr. Nick Sheron, University of Southampton, UK • Dr. Fabio da Silva Gomes, World Public Health Nutrition Association • Dra. Mira Shiva, Initiative for Health & Equity in Society • Elisabeth Sterken, INFACT Canada/IBFAN North America • Dr. Kimber Stanhope, Department of Nutrition, University of California, Davis • Dr. Boyd Swinburn, Co-Chair, World Obesity Policy and Prevention (formerly International Obesity Taskforce) • Dr. Ricardo Uauy, Institute of Nutrition, Universidad de Chile • Dr. Stefanie Vandevijvere, University of Auckland • Dr. Walter Willett, Harvard School of Public Health



Supporting public health in Mexico. Leading scientists, left to right: Benjamin Caballero, Shiriki Kumanyika, Robert Lustig, Graham MacGregor, Reynaldo Martorell, Carlos Monteiro, Dariush Mozaffarian, Marion Nestle, Barry Popkin, Boyd Swinburn, Ricardo Uauy, Walter Willett

The public health crises created by ultra-processed food and drink products mostly manufactured by transnational corporations, and in particular their massive loads of sugars and syrups, have become national emergencies in Latin America. Rates of obesity including among children continue to rise rapidly. The issues are now being confronted at Presidential level in Chile, Uruguay and Brazil, as well as Mexico. The distinguished scientists shown above include people who do not have a reputation as activists, but who have now become politicised in their own countries and internationally. Big Sugar – all the corporations whose profits depend on sugar – is now in deep trouble.

A grand alliance is now being built. This is of networks of public interest organisations and social movements, including the *Big Food Watch* network members some of whom are shown below. It also is of leading scientists committed to public health, together with untold thousands of health professionals and civil servants such as UN and national government officials and advisors. It will be a great battle. Our advantage is that we are right. We have equity and justice on our side.



Big Food Watch – and action – is now networked in civil society organisations throughout the Americas. Left to right above, Fabio Gomes (Brazil), Alejandro Calvillo (Mexico), Michael Jacobson (USA), Cecilia Castillo and Marcella Reyes (Chile), and Isabella Henriques (Brazil).

*Gomes F. Public health nutrition policy. Latin American Presidents are listening [Big Food Watch] [Update]. World Nutrition May 2014, **5**, 5, 410-412*

The Lancet. Social movements
This is the time for direct action

Access February 2013 Paul Nicholson on La Via Campesina here
Access June 2013 on the Slow Food Movement and UN FAO here
Access September 2013 The Lancet Richard Horton on planetary health here
Access February 2014 The Lancet Richard Horton on health governance here
Access March 2014 on the Lancet-Oslo report on global health governance here
Access March 2014 Claudio Schuftan on People's Health Movement here
Access March 2014 The Lancet Richard Horton et al Planetary health manifesto here
Access April 2014 Flavio Valente on FIAN International here
Access April 2014 David Werner on primary health care here



Richard Horton, editor of The Lancet (right) calls for a social movement to deliver planetary health. The good news is that global social movements committed to this vision already live and are thriving

Claudio Schuftan, David Sanders, David Legge, Sarojini Nadimpally report:

That is us, above, from the left. We were amazed to read the Manifesto in *The Lancet* (1) in which its editor Richard Horton (right, above) and colleagues call for 'a powerful social movement based on collective action at every level of society' which will 'deliver planetary health and at the same time support sustainable human development'. Not long afterwards, 4,000 and upwards *people had signed up.*

The world of the authors of the Manifesto seems to be different from the one we see. Are they unaware of the work of Greenpeace, say, or Friends of the Earth? Is Richard Horton forgetting that the People's Health Movement wrote the background papers and case studies to the Lancet-Oslo Commission report on global health governance, credited in *The Lancet*? Also please see the contributions listed above.

So yes, we were taken aback. Our response to the Manifesto is below. Active social movements will gain more traction as more thinking people see that current systems of governance are obsolete. What the Manifesto calls for is a new overarching social movement that would convene and co-ordinate all existing social movements, with the power 'to deliver planetary health'. But who would fund this, and who would it answer to? The Gates Foundation? There is a need for existing social movements to work in solidarity. But the notion of such an all-powerful body feels to us a little bit like hoping for some new body of all-wise guardians. Is this what we really need? For us, it is social movements rooted in the experience of communities that have the task ultimately to transform the state of planetary health – and much else besides.

Box 1

Social movements exist!

Here is our letter, which is accepted by The Lancet and is due to be published.

Richard Horton and colleagues' Manifesto (1) is in the tradition of the *Lancet* founding Editor Thomas Wakley. It champions social medicine, as does *The Lancet* current editor (2). We, as members of the People's Health Movement, also aim to strengthen community and planetary health informed by public health principles. We agree with and endorse the general analysis of *The Lancet* Manifesto. However, the Manifesto makes no mention of existing social movements, many of which have much the same aims as those being proposed. These include as follows. Exposing political and economic systems that jeopardise public health. Emphasising the provision of universal primary health care. Insisting that public health institutions and facilities be protected. Empowering the people most immediately affected and defending their rights. Calling for renewed social values and a vision that puts the public interest first. Pressing governments to protect public goods.

The disorder created by reckless capitalism is authoritatively discredited (3), including by existing social movements. But 'sustainable development' initiatives designed especially for Asia and Africa still almost invariably involve the 'private sector', as lead partners with UN agencies and governments. In reality, the 'private sector' comprises the very transnational corporations whose actions are in conflict with public health. They must be excluded from policy formulations to improve public health (4). Instead, partnerships need to include genuinely independent public interest civil society organisations and social movements.

The Manifesto calls for the creation of a powerful social movement to deliver planetary health and support sustainable human development (1). But there is no reference to the work already being done for example by the World Social Forum, Greenpeace, the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), the Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN), La Via Campesina, ACT UP, the Landless Peoples Movement, or the many other movements respected by governments and UN agencies. There is also no indication of how empowered communities – as partners of the movement -- will become empowered.

The need is not for a new social movement. It is for recognition, inclusion, co-ordination, and strengthening of existing social movements. *The Lancet* should rather call on public health practitioners and existing social movements to come together jointly to act against the structural drivers of health inequality and to protect equitable health systems. Such a move is urgent, and politically wise.

References

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*Schuftan C, Sanders D, Legge D, Nadimpally S. The Lancet. Social movements. This is the time for direct action. [Update] World Nutrition May 2014, **5**, 5, 414-415*

Food systems. The Eat Forum
How to nourish the planet

Access April Editorial on climate change and food systems here
Access this issue Editorial on climate change and food systems here
Access this issue Tony McMichael, Helen Berry, Colin Butler on climate change here



Masterminding a sustainable global food system for this century: Some leaders at the Eat Forum this month in Stockholm: Gunhild Stordalen, Johan Rockström, Bill Clinton, and Jeffrey Sachs

The Update team reports:

The *Eat Forum* being held in Stockholm this month on 26-27 May is designed to integrate and transform thought and action on global food, nutrition and the environment, in the context of climate change. That is the intention of *Gunhild Stordalen* (above left), a resourceful, persuasive Norwegian physician, environmentalist and philanthropist, *as she says in an interview* with the UN-linked Global Forum on Agricultural Research. With colleagues and participants convened by the *Stordalen Foundation*, she might succeed. Participants include (above) environmentalist *Johan Rockström*; 1992-2000 US President Bill Clinton; and by video, economist *Jeffrey Sachs*.

Below left is *Margaret Chan*, director-general of the World Health Organization, fresh from the World Health Assembly held in Geneva the previous week. Her statement at *Eat Forum* given by video address will focus on childhood obesity. On the right is editor of *The Lancet* *Richard Horton*, whose concern with climate change and interest in social movements is well attested. He is ringmaster and rapporteur of the whole event. Centre is the final *Eat Forum* speaker Ron Finley, the 'guerilla gardener' of Los Angeles, dedicated to growing food anywhere and everywhere in cities, and bringing about a little bit of revolution.



Balancing the imperatives of health, wealth and the future of the planet: Margaret Chan and (right) Richard Horton. Letting it all hang out (centre), 'gangsta gardener' from Los Angeles Ron Finley

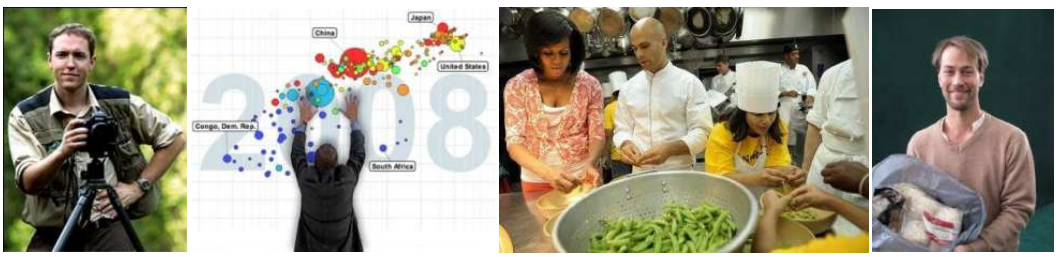


Assessing the impact of climate change on food systems especially in the most vulnerable regions and countries: Vandana Shiva, Christina Kaseba, Dyborn Charlie Chiponga, and David Nabarro

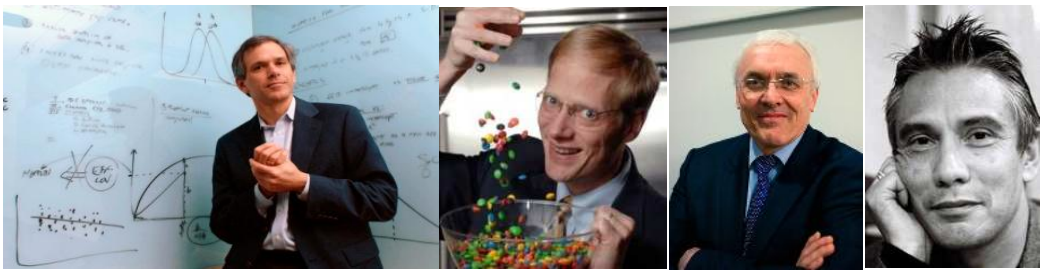
Implications of climate change

Many speakers and participants at the *Eat Forum* so far may not have engaged in any meeting specifically on nutrition. Some of the distinguished invited participants include the UK Prince of Wales (by video) and the Crown Princesses of Sweden and of Norway. (At the time of writing some invited participants were not confirmed). Above are as follows. *Vandana Shiva* from India for many years has fought for rational and appropriate agriculture and manufacture, and therefore is hostile to massively capitalised industry. *Christine Kaseba,* an obstetrician, the first lady of Zambia, will give one of the first keynote statements on the health implications of future food systems. Dyborn Charlie Chiponga of Malawi will speak on small and family farming. *David Nabarro,* co-ordinator of the SUN (Scaling Up Nutrition) initiative, will speak on 'Enabling all people to achieve food and nutrition security: The Zero Hunger challenge, and climate-smart agriculture'.

The range of knowledge and interests of the participants and speakers will challenge the organisers, who need to create a final statement and future programme of work. Below are as follows. *Matthias Klum* as a wildlife photographer, knows the need to protect nature. *Hans Rosling* of the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, also Swedish, is seen demonstrating his dynamic GapMinder projections of statistical trends. White House chef *Sam Kass* is seen here with Michelle Obama, who he advises personally, as a citizen, and as US First Lady. *Tristram Stuart,* British author of *The Bloodless Revolutions: Radical Vegetarians and the Discovery of India,* now a 'freegan' campaigner dedicated to the worldwide elimination of food waste, is pictured with the makings of a good meal that had been thrown out by a supermarket.



Seeing the big pictures, as food systems and cultures change under the pressure of corporate enterprise and environmental deterioration: Matthias Klum, Hans Rosling, Sam Kass, and Tristram Stuart



Measuring the cost and the value of food, eating, nutrition, health and disease. More Eat Forum participants are: Christopher Murray, Brian Wansink. Anthony Costello, and Martin Bloem

The place for transformation

Venue for *Eat Forum* is the Clarion Sign hotel, the most impressive of the chain of 170 Nordic Choice hotels owned by billionaire (measured in $US) property and other entrepreneur Petter Stordalen, who with his wife Gunhild in 2011 created the Stordalen Foundation. Its mission is to build environmental imperatives into public and private enterprise. Leading governments have since the 1980s increasingly relinquished their public duties to private corporations, and protection of the environment is not profitable. So maybe highly-geared inspiration in the public interest will now come from wealthy private institutions. The Stordalen Foundation also has the funds to pay for and to pay speakers. This helps.

Here on this page are more *Eat Forum* participants. Above they are as follows. Statistician *Christopher Murray,* now with his own metrics institute, is a director of the *Global Burden of Disease* project. *Brian Wansink* of Cornell University, formerly with the US Department of Agriculture, has a special interest in mindful eating. *Anthony Costello*, Institute for Global Health in London, speaks on nutrition, human health and the planet. *Martin Bloem* is chief of nutrition at the World Food Programme.

Eat Forum is designed also to encourage partnerships with industry, and incorporates the 'nudge' theory to encourage industry to think of health. Below are Feike Sijbesma, the chief executive of DSM, the transnational corporation that supplies supplements to industry and to the World Food Programme whose director *Ertharine Cousin* is with him at left; Michiel Bakker, director of Google Foods; Richard Bergfors, CEO of Max Burgers, that outsells McDonald's in South Sweden, and Peter Bakker of the World Business Council, whose theme is corporate social values.



With a nudge, will industry budge. Feike Sijbesma, CEO of DSM, Michiel Bakker, CEO of Google foods, Richard Bergfors, CEO of Max Burgers, Peter Bakker of World Business Council



Reconciling food needs and nutrition goals with social, cultural and environmental imperatives: scholars Walter Willett, Tim Lang, Carlos Monteiro, and (left in the picture) Alessandro Demaio

Social responsibility of science

Yes, apeakers at the *Eat Forum* do include experts with formal qualifications in agriculture, food and nutrition policy and practice. Three of those pictured above are all contributors to *WN*. *Walter Willett* of the Harvard School of Public Health gives a presentation on the first day on the state of the science. Tim Lang of City University London, speaks from his work on 'econutrition' on the second day. Carlos Monteiro gives a presentation on 'How to nourish bodies, souls and the planet; Diets based on foods and meals - A blueprint from Brazil', from *The Food System* work developed at the University of São Paulo and featured in *WN,* also on the second day. All three have earned a reputation as academics with sustained commitment to the social responsibilities of scientists and to the translation of knowledge into action. One participant at the *EAT Forum* from a younger generation is Alessandro Demaio, currently at Harvard, pictured above with his media expert brother Guiseppe, who has a new answer to chronic non-commuicable diseases.

Change does not come only as a result of meetings of minds, especially when, as at the *Eat Forum,* the time is most devoted to presentations without scope for much interchange. Protection of what is good, and transformation of what is bad, requires effective stable patient energetic organisation. Many believe that radical insight and action, as is needed now, *requires networks* like the People's Health Movement, La Via Campesina, the Slow Food Movement, and the Brazilian *Sem Terra* (Landless) Movement, prepared to challenge authority with direct action. Much may depend on whether the Stordalen Foundation has the inclination and stamina to transform *Eat* from a forum, so that it identifies and magnifies existing movements.

The most significant participants at the Stockholm meeting may therefore include Vandana Shiva, Tristram Stuart and Ron Finley, who work all the time with the populations and communities most immediately affected by the disruption and corruption of food systems and supplies, and consequent insecurity and malnutrition. Ron Finley's mission statement (in the picture above) is: 'How the tactics of revolutionaries have revolutionized urban farming, and soon the world with it'. Will the venue of the Clarion Sign hotel be the occasion of a clarion call that resonates throughout the world? This *Update* will be updated.

*Anon. Food systems. The Eat Forum. How to nourish the planet [Update]. World Nutrition May 2014, **5**,5, 416-419*



Big Food Watch 'Free markets'

Obesity proves market failure

Access WHO Bulletin Roberto de Vogli et al on deregulation and obesity here
Access Roberto de Vogli on Freeing Up Obesity here
Access video of Roberto de Vogli on RT television here



A woman passes by a burger outlet in Britain. Without adequate zoning and other necessary regulation, fast food joints increase, as does the body fat of the people who regularly eat in them

Roberto de Vogli reports:

Since 1980, obesity rates have tripled in most countries. There are now almost two billion overweight people in the world. Policy recipes to fix the problem abound. More education, fewer cars. More bicycles, less television. The list goes on and on. So far, though, public health interventions have failed spectacularly. But why? (1).

The rise of obesity is often described as an effect of specific 'individual and lifestyle choices'. But choice is only a small factor, and often does not apply – young children are not choosing their lifestyles, for example. In reality, obesity is largely a byproduct of social, economic and political changes in societies. When contrasted with more protected economies, countries adopting aggressive deregulation policies have experienced faster increases in body mass index and faster consumption of fast food and soft drinks (2).

The more a country deregulates its economy and so gives commercial freedom to food product manufacturers and caterers, the fatter its people are. This is more or less what has happened in the food and agriculture sectors, beginning in the 1980s at the beginning of the so-called 'deregulation revolution.' It is exactly during this period that worldwide food systems and supplies and thus dietary patterns dramatically changed towards ultra-processed products.



Ronald McDonald is better known by children in the US than any other fictional character except Santa Claus. The McDonald's yellow arches have more brand recognition than the Christian cross

Not competition but concentration

An unregulated market leads to the rise of obesity through market concentration. This has created 'Big Food', which is to say, oligopolies that flood food supplies with cheap, unhealthy, ultra-processed products, including 'fast food' and soft drinks. With no constraints and minimal regulation, what is supposed to be market competition actually degenerates into market oligopoly (semi- or quasi-monopoly). In economies that lack equitable rules, the winners of competitions find it more profitable and commercially rational to suppress the losing competitors. This means a gradual decline of smaller economic actors, pushed out of business or 'swallowed up' through mergers and acquisitions in a process of 'corporate cannibalism.'

The rise and consolidation of transnational food product corporations, and the decline of national and local food systems and small farms, was first felt in the USA, the very country that led the 'deregulation crusade'. Deregulation went global, with the rise of transnational corporations whose economies have become as large as those of middle-size countries. Ultra-processed products have crossed national borders one after another and have penetrated established food systems and cultures.

As food systems have become increasingly dominated by ultra-processed products, including 'fast food' and soft drinks, food oligopolies have made enormous profits which may now amount to $US billions a year, and have the power to set prices at will and to dictate the terms and conditions of their market sectors. Big Food has become very active politically, and in the US and other countries spends vast amounts of money lobbying against regulations designed to safeguard public health and to protect national and local industry, including farmers, manufacturers, retailers and caterers. 'Foodopolies' have also aggressively invested in advertisements that shape preferences and tastes especially of children. They have succeeded. About 96 per cent of American schoolchildren can identify Ronald McDonald; the only fictional character with more recognition is Santa Claus.

Box 1

Deregulation makes populations fat

This is a shortened and edited version of the media release issued by WHO (3).

Governments could slow – and even reverse – the growing epidemic of obesity by taking measures to counter fast food production and consumption, according to a study published in the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* (2).

The study is the first to look at the effects of deregulation, including in the agriculture and food sectors, and at the resulting increase in fast food transactions on obesity over time. It suggests that if governments take action, they can prevent and control overweight and obesity, which can have serious long-term health consequences including diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and some forms of cancer. Rather than looking at the density of fast food outlets or self-reported fast food consumption, as researchers have done in the past, the authors took a novel approach. They examined data on the number of fast food transactions per capita from 1999 to 2008 in 25 high-income countries, and comparing these with figures on body mass index (BMI) in the same countries over the same time period. They found that the average number of annual fast food transactions per capita increased from 26.61 to 32.76, and that average BMI increased from 25.8 to 26.4.

Needed: regulation

'Unless governments take steps to regulate their economies, the invisible hand of the market will continue to promote obesity worldwide, with disastrous consequences for future public health and economic productivity,' says lead author Roberto De Vogli, from the University of California, Davis, US. The study focuses on high-income countries, but its findings are also relevant to lower income countries for, as he says: 'Virtually all nations have undergone a process of market deregulation and globalisation'. The average number of annual fast food transactions per capita increased in all 25 countries examined. The sharpest increases were in Canada (16.6 more transactions), Australia (14.7), Ireland (12.3), and New Zealand (10.1). Lowest increases were in countries with more stringent market regulation, such as Italy (1.5), the Netherlands (1.8), Greece (1.9) and Belgium (2.1).

'This study shows how important public policies are for addressing the epidemic of obesity," said Francesco Branca, director of the Department of Nutrition for Health and Development at WHO. The new study reinforces a growing body of literature providing evidence for measures that governments could take to reverse the obesity epidemic by hindering the spread of ultra-processed foodstuffs. Such measures include:

- Economic incentives for growers to sell healthy foods and fresh food items rather than ultra-processed foods, and subsidies to grow fruit and vegetables.
- Economic disincentives for industries to sell fast food, ultra-processed foods and soft drinks, such as an ultra-processed food tax and/or the reduction or elimination of subsidies to growers/companies using excessive fertilisers, pesticides, chemicals and antibiotics.
- Zoning policies to control the number and type of food outlets;
- Tighter regulation of the advertising of fast food and soft drinks, especially to children.
- Trade regulations discouraging the importation and consumption of fast food, ultra-processed foods and soft drinks.
- More effective labelling for ultra-processed products, including fast food and soft drinks.

So what is to be done?

A good way to start will be to introduce an 'ultra-processed tax' on products such as fast food and soft drinks. Corporate libertarians may consider taxation an unfair intrusion in market affairs, yet Adam Smith supported a sugar tax. In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) he wrote: 'Sugar, rum, and tobacco are commodities which are nowhere necessaries of life, which are become objects of almost universal consumption, and which are, therefore, extremely proper subjects of taxation.'

Revenues from an ultra-processed tax can be used to subsidise vegetables and fruits, and cooperative and family farms growing fresh and healthy products. Switzerland has experienced the slowest increases both in body mass index and in fast-food consumption per capita. Most Swiss farmers are small producers.

Large-scale industrial agriculture needs to be discouraged, especially that which uses excessive fertilisers, pesticides, growth hormones and antibiotics. Tighter regulations on packaging and labelling of food items and advertising of unhealthy products are needed, especially those aimed at children. Most important will be anti-trust laws to reduce market concentration in the agriculture and food sector.

Of course, all these regulations can hardly occur without deeper, more systematic changes in the political economy. Since the beginning of the 'deregulation revolution' global and national economic policies have been increasingly affected by the ideology of the 'self-correcting market'. But as the 2008 economic crisis showed, this ideology is horribly inadequate. Governments need to take steps to regulate the market system's built-in tendency toward consolidation and externalities.

Obesity is an example of market failure. As long as the food and agriculture sectors continue to be driven by the ideology of 'small government and big business', the chances of reducing obesity worldwide will remain slim (4).

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3 Anon. Tighter economic regulation needed to reverse obesity epidemic Geneva> World Health Organization, February 2013. http://www.who.int/bulletin /releases/NFM0214/en/

4 Robert de Vogli and Abby Martin on RT Television. https://www. youtube com/watch?v=ohCMJ9PDEsY

*De Vogli R. Big Food Watch. Free markets. Obesity shows market failure [Update]. World Nutrition May 2014, **5**,5, 420-423*



Big Food Watch

Physical activity does not need Coke

Access August 2012 news story on Coca-Cola and London Olympics here
Access December 2013 Fabio Gomes on the IUNS Granada congress here



An official launch of the World Cup Coca-Cola world 'trophy tour' with stars of the five Brazilian World Cup winning teams, the whole event here apparently being blessed by Christ the Redeemer

ThiagoHerick de Sá reports:

'Impact of changes in trip mode shift and trip distance on active transportation and sedentary time in São Paulo: a mathematical approach'. This was the talk derived from my research at the School of Public Health in São Paulo that I gave at the International Congress on *Physical Activity and Public Health*, held in Rio de Janeiro between 9-11April. This fifth congress was the first to be held in the global South, and for me as an early-career researcher in the physical activity and public health field it was a great opportunity to meet many leaders in the field. But the meeting was sponsored by Coca-Cola, unlike the biennial Brazilian Congress on Physical Activity and Health over almost twenty years. Also, as you can see from the four lists below, every day the congress programme included sessions funded by Coca-Cola.

April 9 16:30-18:00	Energy Balance, Energy Flux and the Regulation of Caloric Intake *Sponsored by The Coca-Cola Company* Chair: STEVEN N BLAIR (United States) Historical Overview Presenter: ROBIN SHOOK (United States) Energy Balance Presenter: GREGORY HAND (United States) Interventions for Energy Balance Presenter: WILLEM VAN MECHELEN (Netherlands) Changing Communities to Promote Energy Balance Presenter: WENDY BROWN (Australia)

But that was not all. If the policy and practice of the *International Congress of Nutrition in Granada, Spain last September* was a model, any industry sponsor of conference sessions also determines the topic and speakers of the sessions, with a notional approval by the conference organisers. That is to say, the topics and the speakers at these sessions in Rio, all of which were in effect plenary, were in harmony with Coca-Cola policies. Some of the speakers are or have been funded by Coca-Cola or other corporations whose policies and practices are harmful to public health, but some scientists may believe that this is not a problem.

April 9 12:30-14:00	What is causing the world-wide rise in body weight? *Sponsored by The Coca-Cola Company* Chair: GREGORY HAND (United States) The Obesity Pandemic Is Due to People Eating More Trends in Energy Intake and Macronutrients Presenter: JOANNE SLAVIN (United States) Declining Trends in Energy Expenditure Explain the Obesity Pandemic Presenter: STEVEN N BLAIR (United States) How to Increase Community Energy Expenditure Presenter: SANDRA MARCELA MAHECHA MATSUDO (Brazil)

I believe that the presence of corporations like Coca-Cola at these conferences 'normalises' the idea that it is acceptable to receive support from industries that do not have an immediate conflict of interest with physical activity itself, while having very serious conflicts of interest with public health. This influences the nature of physical activity and public health in Brazil and makes for new collaborations, such as that between Coca-Cola and the well-known and important *AgitaMundo* programme (*Coca-Cola with us in the World Physical Activity Day of 2014*).

April 10 12:30-14:00	Exercise is Medicine *Sponsored by The Coca-Cola Company* Introduction: Is EIM a Public Health Strategy? Presenter: MICHAEL PRATT (United States) Global Implementation of EIM Presenter: JOHN DUPERLY (Colombia) Incorporating PA into Primary Care in Brazil Presenter: PEDRO CURI HALLAL (Brazil) Cost Effectiveness of physical activity counseling and referral in the Netherlands Presenter: WILLEM VAN MECHELEN (Netherlands) Physical activity promotion and EIM in Russia Presenter: RIMMA POTEMKINA (Russian Federation) Presenter: SANDRA MARCELA MAHECHA MATSUDO (Brazil)

Conferences are essential as part of building a research field. But when conferences are privately funded it becomes harder for conference organisers to get support from sources of public money. This is even more so when non-industry funders assume, not always correctly, that transnational corporations making profits of $US billions a year hand out vast amounts of money to conference organisers.

All this is happening at a time when sweetened soft drinks are agreed by practically all relevant independent organisations and investigators to be a major cause of the currently uncontrolled pandemic of obesity, including among children, and including in lower-income countries, such as China, India – and Brazil.

April 11 **12:30-14:00**	The International Study of Childhood Obesity, Lifestyle and the Environment *Sponsored by The Coca-Cola Company* Co-Chair: PETER KATZMARZYK (United States) Co-Chair: OLGA LUCIA SARMIENTO (Colombia) The International Study of Childhood Obesity, Lifestyle and the Environment (ISCOLE): Presenter: PETER KATZMARZYK (United States) ISCOLE: Results from South Africa Presenter: ESTELLE VICTORIA LAMBERT (South Africa) ISCOLE: Results from Brazil Presenter: VICTOR KEIHAN RODRIGUES MATSUDO (Brazil) ISCOLE: Results from Australia Presenter: CAROL MAHER (Australia) ISCOLE: Results from India Presenter: REBECCA RAJ (India) Discussion and Facilitated Question Period Presenter: OLGA LUCIA SARMIENTO (Colombia)

Pressure is growing to tax or restrict sugared soft drinks. But when Coca-Cola is seen as a public benefactor, which obviously is their strategy, public health policy-makers may waver and weaken.

The good news is that my field of physical activity and public health is growing, improving the quantity and the quality of our research. Great conferences have been organised worldwide. Brilliant physical activity promotion programmes, such as the *Agita* and *Ciclovia* initiatives, have been established in many countries, and I believe that the great majority do not involve conflicts of interest with public health.

I still feel bitter, and all the more so because Brazil has a proud record of supporting universities and associated conferences with public money. We already have the capacity to keep on improving our field without such harmful partnerships. The physical activity and public health field never needed and does not need this kind of partnerships. On the other hand, Coca-Cola and other Big Food corporations need us, as a diversionary tactic.

The bigger picture

It is not hard to see what is happening. Big Food corporations are spending altogether what must amount to $US billions on their strategy to claim that obesity is caused by physical inactivity and not by their products. Big Food sponsors and supports sports and physical activity events all over the world, many of which *appeal to children.* Their engagement with physical activity and public health organisations and professionals is part of their 'corporate social responsibility' strategy, to show themselves as good citizens. Their campaigns also include techniques to evade regulation and to influence the conduct of science (1, 2), using methods like those used by cigarette corporations in the recent past (3).

This can be seen as a kind of retribution in Latin America, where laws to protect children against ultra-processed products were implemented in Mexico, Chile and Costa Rica at Presidential level, and where we face an intense dispute between the civil society organizations and the Big Food to limit the advertising of ultra-processed products to children in Brazil (4).



The Coca Cola corporation states that its advertising and marketing is not aimed at children under the age of 12. Yet children are constantly involved in Coke-sponsored sports, leisure and fun events

The support of conferences and physical activity events is just one small piece in the big picture of Coca-Cola global strategy. As indicated in the picture introducing this story, starting next month June the FIFA World Cup is held in Brazil (5). In 2016 the Olympics will be held in Brazil. Both are committed to sponsorships from *McDonald's and Coca-Cola*(6).

This outrageous practice is forced on national governments who bid to host these events by the international sports federations, with vast sums of money involved. Nothing can stop the deals. The Federation of Football Associations and the International Olympic Committee, themselves in effect transnationals, have signed contracts with McDonald's and Coca-Cola up to and beyond 2020.

References

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3 Brownell KD, Warner KE. The perils of ignoring history: Big Tobacco played dirty and millions died. How similar is Big Food? *Milbank Quarterly* 2009;**87**(1), 259-294.

4 Jacoby E, Rivera J, Cordero S, et al. Legislation. Children. Obesity. Standing up for children's rights in Latin America. *World Nutrition*. 2012; **11**:483–516

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6 Anon. *Transnational corporations. Olympics* Ronald McDonald and the Olympic vision Website of World Public Health Nutrition Association, August 2012.

Sá TH. Physical activity does not need Coke. [Big Food Watch]
*World Nutrition May 2014, **5**, 5, 424-427*



Big Food Watch network member

Isabella Henriques. ALANA

Access November 2012 Enrique Jacoby et al on Latin American law here
Access this issue Fabio Gomes on Big Food Watch in Latin America here





alana

Editor's note

In this issue of *WN* we profile the Big Food Watch network member ALANA. This leading Brazilian civil society organisation has the mission to defend and protect the rights of children and adolescents. One of its campaigning areas is the abuse of advertising and marketing. This is the responsibility of Isabella Henriques. Previously a lawyer in private practice, her special concern was and remains human rights, especially of children and adolescents in the face of advertising and marketing.

Isabela Sattamini (left in the pictures above) writes: The focus of Isabella Henriques's work as a lawyer, ever since she qualified in 1997, has been human rights and the defence of a free press and media. In 2005 she developed her Master's thesis into her book *Abusive Food Marketing to Children*. In the book she explores the intentions, meaning and applications of current Brazilian law as it applies to consumers in general and children in particular. Her special interest, as the title of the book indicates, is commercial advertising and marketing to children and adolescents, in particular of food products.

Her thesis then, highly relevant now given the Brazilian federal decision summarised in Box 1 below, is that all forms of advertising to children and younger adolescents are abusive, because they have not yet developed the ability fully to discriminate between information and propaganda, and to judge what is in their best interests.

In 2005, Isabella was invited to be founder-coordinater of ALANA's Children and Consumption project. The principles of the project are that certainly until the age of 12 – and at older ages also – children do not have the ability fully to make sense of marketing messages.. ALANA's work is designed to strengthen the commitment of the Brazilian federal government, which is enshrined in its 1988 Constitution, to became and remain an ever-stronger participatory democracy. In light of this, Alana's task includes the raising of public consciousness on its issues of concern and pressing for laws and regulations that give children freedom from propaganda of all types.

Big Food Watchers

Giving children freedom from propaganda



Children need protection and freedom from the harmful messages from commercial advertising and marketing, concerned only with increased sales and profits, and not at all with welfare of children

Isabela Sattamini writes:

The Alana Institute is a non-profit organisation created in 1994. It began in the impoverished town of *Jardim Pantanal* in the State of São Paulo. The original work was to develop social and environmental projects for children, designed to improve and facilitate their education, culture and recreation. For older children support in social welfare and employment opportunities was offered. Alana has grown into a national organisation with around 50 staff, based in São Paulo, Brazil's biggest city. It now mounts new projects and initiatives, such as *Ciranda movies* made by and for children, and the *Território Brincar* project where children invent as well as play games.

Alana's general purpose is to empower people so they are able to lead better lives. Its mission statement includes: 'To foster and promote the welfare, education, culture, protection and support of the general population, targeting enhancement of all people and improving their quality of life, always aware of human development and enhancement of lives of families and the community at large'.

The Alana *Child and Consumption* project was created in 2006 to protect children's health. The general aim of the project is to raise consciousness of relevant issues throughout Brazil. The immediate goal of the project is to regulate and as necessary restrict propaganda aimed at children. In March 2014 CONANDA, the federal agency charged with responsibility to protect childrens' rights, stated that all advertising and marketing of any description aimed at children up to the age of 12, will by law be prohibited. This has been headline news throughout the world. CONANDA's ruling may be challenged. See Box 1.

Box 1

Freedom from propaganda

CONANDA is the Brazilian National Council of Children and Adolescents' Rights. As empowered by the 1988 Constitution defining Brazil as a participatory democracy, it has the authority and duty to lay down national policy, including laws, to uphold children's and adolescents' rights. It also has full competency to restrain and regulate practices that violate these rights. It is composed of representatives of civil society and of the federal government. There are no doubts regarding the binding power of CONANDA's decisions.

At its meeting on 13 March 2014 CONANDA approved unanimously *its Resolution 163.* This considers all publicity and marketing directed towards children up to 12 years of age to be abusive. The Resolution defines as 'marketing' any commercial activity projecting products, services, brands and companies at events, public spaces, internet web pages, television channels and at other places or on other media, at any time of day. Thus it is now illegal to direct any form of propaganda at children up to 12 years of age. A sufficient reason for this decision is that up to that age – many would say until older ages – children are suggestible, vulnerable, impulsive, and readily exploited, and habits formed at that time of life are liable to persist to older ages and into adult life.

Abuses include 'the practice of directing publicity and marketing communication to children with the intention of persuading them to the consumption of any product or service' through childish language; children's songs or songs recorded with children's voices; representations of children, people or celebrities that have an appeal to children; and celebrities and television show presenters, cartoons; puppets and similar characters, promotions with prizes or collectables and the promotion of competitions or games that appeal to children.

CONANDA took into account children's vulnerability, and the impact of propaganda on issues such as child obesity, violence, and early sexualisation. Resolution 163 states 'We consider abusive…publicity… that incites violence, exploits fear or superstition, that takes advantage of children's impaired abilities of judgement and lack of experience, that disrespects environment-friendly values, or that is liable to induce behaviour harmful to health or safety'.

So what is happening now. Isabella Henriques says: 'Those who wish to preserve the practice of propaganda aimed at children naturally see the Resolution as a threat to their interests and are now trying to discredit it. They are also trying to get away with ignoring it. At the time of writing there is still propaganda directed to children for example on television, internet and points of sale. It is now up to all relevant organisations and people at all levels inside and outside Brazil. to detect and denounce violations, and for the Ministry of Justice to apply sanctions'.

Formal complaints can be made directly to the companies violating Resolution 163 through the consumer communication channels they are obliged to provide. Models and petitions to can be found on at this link: *http://www.prioridadeabsoluta.org.br/como-fazer-para-proteger-as-criancas-da-publicidade-infantil*

Resolution 163 could be formally challenged in the courts. But it is grounded within the formal federal legislative process and has full legal legitimacy. Meanwhile, it is imperative that Brazil' National Congress builds on Resolution 163. Text proposed or discussed should include elements that bring further protection of children's rights, now that Resolution 163 has established a new, detailed level of protection against propaganda aimed at children.

The evidence that propaganda at anything like current levels harms children is conclusive. Some of the harms already suffered by the commercialisation of childhood are obsession with buying things, addictive behaviour, overweight and obesity, premature sexuality, loss of interest in schooling, early sexualisation, teenage pregnancies, mayhem and violence, and disturbed family and social relations. The Alana *Child and Consumption* project operates in three areas, in an interdisciplinary manner.

- Legal and advocacy. The Alana team investigates complaints of abuse, prepares reports and representations, and discusses with legislators at federal, state and municipal levels, the drafting, agreeing and implementing of public policies designed to ensure that children are protected against unsafe, unhealthy and otherwise undesirable products.
- Education and research. This is being built into a centre of scientific and other reliable reference and specially written and designed educational material, for use by policy-makers, researchers, teachers and parents. The purpose is to increase knowledge, improve policy development, and to inform and guide legislators, educators, and citizens.
- Communication and events. The Alana team responsible here, creates audiovisual awareness campaigns and filmed documentaries on all aspects of consumption in childhood. These may be produced with the participation of children themselves. These are shown and promoted at all types of relevant event, in Brazil and when invited, internationally.

A general aim of Alana is to facilitate and encourage good and effective citizenship throughout life. Some of the areas in which Alana works are health, social welfare, culture and arts, advocacy, community development, education, sports, and training for work and citizenship.. It avoids areas that should be the responsibility of national or local government. It is committed to support communities to support themselves.

*Satttamini I, Henriques I. Big Food Watchers. Giving children freedom from propaganda [Update]. World Nutrition May 2014, **5**, 5, 428-431*

How to respond

Updates are short communications designed to add new information to *WN* commentaries and other contributions. They are invited from all readers. We pay special attention to issues in less resourced countries and settings. Updates can be to *WN* commentaries and other contributions published at any time. Usual length for main text of *Updates* is between 500 and 1,500 words but they can be shorter or longer. Any references should usually be limited to up to 10 but more are acceptable for longer pieces. *Updates* are edited for length and style, may be developed, and once edited are sent to authors for approval. Address contributions for publication to wn.updates@gmail.com