WN *The issue*

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Sugars, fats, the good life well led
What's it all about?



Above: Actors on sugar Graham MacGregor, Katherine Jenner. Winnie Byanyima leads Oxfam onslaught on inequity. Fabio Gomes watches Big Food, with (below) Pepsi's super-brand Beyonce. Carlos Monteiro, Geoffrey Cannon show why product reformulation will not improve public health. Salutes this issue are to Fred Kummerow, Norman Cantor, Nelson Mandela, and Henri Matisse

Editor's note

Our cover feature (top row above left), in *Update,* is on sugar, also the topic of the *WN* editorial that follows. We outline the indictment against sugar and greet the launch of UK pressure group Action on Sugar, whose leaders include (top, next), **Graham MacGregor** and **Katharine Jenner**. *Update* begins with an account of the World Economic Forum take on inequity, condemned by Oxfam executive director (top left) **Winnie Byanyima**. Also in *Update* **Fabio Gomes** writes on the privatisation of nature. Our *Big Food Watch* commentary is on global food product power branding and the Pepsi-Co $US 50 million deal with Beyonce (second row, left). **Carlos Monteiro** and **Geoffrey Cannon** continue our *Food System* series of commentaries and explain why reformulation of ultra-processed products will not improve public health. *Inspiration* salutes biochemist **Fred Kummerow** (larger picture), who states that the US government failure to prohibit trans-fats is illegal. The *What Do You Think*? column celebrates the historian of heroes **Norman Cantor**, and insists that human life is not sacred, again encouraged by **Nelson Mandela.** In *Feedback* **Claudio Schuftan** has more to say about **Bill Gates,** and **Thomas Samaras** says that being small is good for human health as well as the planet. In *Network*, **Henri Matisse** depicts the sensory joys of shared meals.

Inequity. World Economic Forum. Oxfam
Global power plays





Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum (left) is worried about outrageous inequity. So is Winnie Byanyima of Oxfam, whose searing report uncovers the use of wealth to usurp power

The Issue team writes: The World Economic Forum met in Davos in late January. Its topic was *The Reshaping of the World: Consequences for Society, Politics and Business.* WEF managing director Robert Greenhill foresaw a world with genomically honed technology, in which people protect their own health in ways such as consuming less salt and sugar. WEF founder Klaus Schwab (above left) was worried about young people without skills, jobs or hope who could disrupt the economic order.

His concern was amplified by Oxfam executive director Winnie Byanyima (above right), at Davos with a report showing that now, a total of 85 people own $US 1 trillion (thousand million), as much as the income of the world's 3.5 billion most impoverished people. For a start, the Oxfam report says, corporations participating in Davos should pledge to stop avoiding payment of tax. *Access the Update here.*

Action on Sugar
UK professionals go over the top






The issue cover story includes news of the launch of Action on Sugar, led by UK 'health chiefs' including (above) Aseem Malhotra and Simon Capewell, urged on by Robert Lustig from the US

The Issue team writes: The tide is turning against sugar. This is the theme of the first editorial in this series of *World Nutrition*. For half a century the expert consensus position has been that the main single dietary 'villain' is saturated fat, and then also

more recently *trans*-fats, and then salt. The disease focus has been cardiovascular disease (heart attacks) and cerebrovascular disease (stroke). Now and rather suddenly, the pendulum has swung, and sugar (or to be more precise added sugars and syrups) is even being seen as the number one 'villain', with obesity and diabetes as the main focus. *In this Update* we summarise the indictment against sugar.

UK sugar action

We have been prompted by the launch in the UK, after the January issue of *WN* went on-line, of Action on Sugar (AoS). This new pressure group is led by cerebrovascular disease specialist Graham MacGregor, leader of World Action on Salt and Health (WASH). AoS campaign director is nutritionist Katharine Jenner. (They are pictured at the beginning of *Update).*

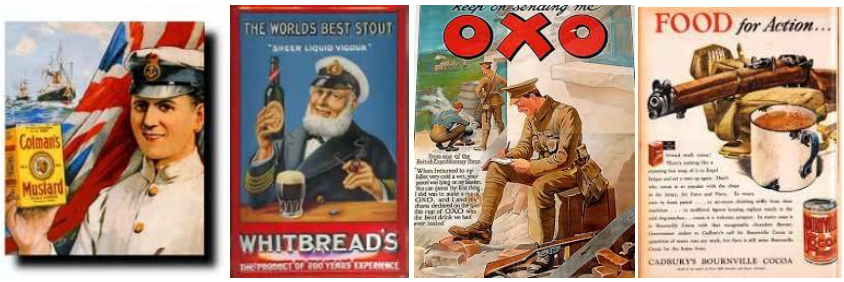
AoS science director is cardiologist Aseem Malhotra (above, left) who believes that sugar, not fat, is the number one dietary enemy. Next is epidemiologist and AoS activist Simon Capewell, who delighted media headline writers with his 'Sugar is the new tobacco'. AoS is spurred on by US endocrinologist Robert Lustig (right). The initial advisory group includes a substantial number of UK specialists. These include veterans concerned with sugar and also an impressive selection of the UK medical establishment. The strategy of AoS as specified by chair Graham MacGregor, is to encourage the UK government to nudge the UK branches of industry based in the UK, voluntarily to reduce the amount of sugar added to processed products. *Access the Update here*

Big Food Watch
Global power brands



The Coca-Cola global power brand image (right) is valued at $US 55 billion. Great British brands like Newcastle Brown Ale and Hula-Hoops (middle pictures) are aspiring to global power status

The Issue team writes: With industrialisation came sugary, fatty, salty or alcoholic products. Those most profitable were branded, often with the names of the owners. In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Leonard Bloom seeks his fortune by composing jingles, such as 'What is life without/Plumtrees's Potted Meat/Incomplete/With it, an abode of bliss'.



Just the stuff to give the troops. Great British brand images that tied their products to Britannia ruling the waves and an Empire, and fighting the fuzzies and the Germans, are long gone dreams

In Peter Ackroyd's *English Music*, Timothy Holcombe remembers his childhood in the names of food products. 'The bottle of White's Lemonade. The yellow tin of Colman's Mustard. The green box of Tip-Top Tea. Dark bottles of Whitbread's Stout. Oxo. Bournville Cocoa'. As seen above, the brand images of many great British products first manufactured and marketed over a century ago, sold their goods by evoking a dream of a land of hope and glory and imperial conquest. This has now all long gone.

In our *Big Food Watch commentary in this issue*, we show that modern branding taps into what marketing magicians envision as the moods of our times. Globalisation is now the name of the game. Surviving Great British brands are going global, as their owners sell out to transnational corporations. The vision of power image wizards is aspiration to the status of the global empire of Coca-Cola, now even more deeply imprinted than Disney, whose brand (below, right) is now valued at $US 55 billion. Pepsi-Co, far behind Coca-Cola in brand power, has now hitched its supermarket trolley to Beyonce (below, left), and paid her $US 50 million out of a total budget of $US 500-600 million. The idea is to reformulate Pepsi's brand image into one of worldwide fun for you live for now, with products hitting the sweet bliss point.

Will soft drink manufacturers respond to public health campaigns, such as Action of Sugar, now launched in the UK, and volunteer to include warnings about obesity and diabetes on the cans and bottles of their sugared products? Experience with the tobacco and alcoholic drink industries indicates that this is extremely unlikely.



Beyonce is on her trolley (above, left), having gained $US 50 million to reformulate Pepsi into a global power brand to rival Coca-Cola (right) especially in Asia, Africa and the global South

The Food System. Position paper
Product reformulation is not the answer



Reformulation of ultra-processed products to contain less salt or sugar or fat, sounds like a good idea. But there is a heavy price. Manufacturers claim or imply positive health benefits for such products

Carlos Monteiro and Geoffrey Cannon write: Our *The Food System position paper* in this issue of *WN* is concerned with reformulation of ultra-processed products, so that for example they contain less salt or sugar, or more vitamins or minerals. This option, greatly favoured by campaigners and endorsed by governments, suits manufacturers, and is a justification for 'public-private partnerships'. We explain why product reformulation is liable to do more harm than good, especially when it triggers explicit or implied health claims such as those shown above. Some of our points are summarised in a recent paper in *The Lancet*: an edited extract is below in Box 1.

Box 1

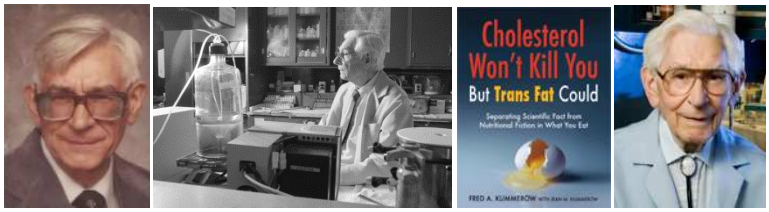
Ultra-processed product reformulation will not help

The case for reformulation is most apparent in high-income countries where markets are saturated with ultra-processed products. Consumers in such countries might prefer the new product without consuming more ultra-processed products. Nonetheless, in such countries, the main emphasis and support from national governments and the public health community should be promotion of healthy meals, dishes, and foods. In low-income countries, any benefits are less obvious, and dangers are very apparent. In such countries, consumption of ultra-processed products is low. They are therefore the prime targets of transnational corporations. If these manufacturers reformulate, advertise, and promote some of their less unhealthy products as healthy, overall consumption of such ultra-processed products is likely to increase. This would further undermine long-established dietary patterns based on fresh or minimally processed foods.

Reformulation of ultra-processed food and drink products is similar to the introduction of filtered and then low-tar cigarettes. It is a damage limitation exercise, to avoid evidence-based approaches such as restriction of availability and of advertising, and pricing policies designed to promote healthy food.

Summarised and edited from Moodie R, Stuckler D, Monteiro C et al. Profits and pandemics. Prevention of harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol and ultra-processed product industries. Non-communicable diseases series paper 4. The Lancet 12 February 2013. doi.org/10.1016/ S0140-6736(12)62089-3

Inspiration. Fred Kummerow
The man who knew about *trans*-fat



Fred Kummerow in mid-career (left) and now (in his laboratory second to left and right) is the US biochemist who has known for half a century that trans-fat is toxic. His book is also shown above

Geoffrey Cannon writes: It was Ross Hume Hall (*my January column*) and Gyorgy Scrinis (*his January commentary*) who led me to Fred Kummerow. They indicated that he was the US biochemist who knew from his experiments on animal and human tissue as from the 1960s that dietary cholesterol and saturated fats from fresh food are not a cause of coronary heart disease. The mistake, he said, was due to confusion with industrially produced *trans*-fats, on which he was an authority. If this was true, I wondered, why did I and others know nothing about this work? So I looked him up on the internet, found a telephone number in Illinois, dialled it, and Fred answered. His 100th birthday is this coming October. Thrilled, I asked him for details, which he sent immediately. He is this month's Inspiration

What do you think? Norman Cantor
The alchemy of food



Norman Cantor (above, left) chronicles leaders such as (next) Alexander the Great, Frederick II Hohenstaufen, John of Gaunt – and fellow historians. Who are the heroes of nutrition science?

Geoffrey Cannon writes: History is in part the story of great leaders and changes they have made. We know about monarchs, politicians, philosophers, mathematicians, physicists, chemists, biologists, naturalists, explorers. But outside circles of colleagues, nutrition scientists remain anonymous. Why is this, and which of them should be celebrated in thrilling books for the interested general reader? Influenced by genius chronicler Norman Cantor, this is a theme of my column in this issue.

Feedback. Bill Gates
Master of whose universe?



Isabela Sattamini writes: Claudio Schuftan writes another long letter *in Feedback,* about the Gates Foundation. What place does philanthropy have in a public health nutrition journal? Why pick on Bill Gates (above)? And, surely the Gates Foundation does good work? Also, Fred Kummerow says why he is sueing the US government for refusal to prohibit production of trans-fats, and Thomas Samaras says being small protects human health and promotes longevity. *Access them here*

Network. Henri Matisse
The pleasures of the table



Fabio Gomes writes: Henri Matisse (left, above, as a young man) is best known as the master painter of colour, shape, form, movement, and sensuality. These all come together in the ways he celebrates the pleasures of mealtimes shared at table in beautiful environments (the other pictures above) *this month in Network.*

Status

The issue is reviewed by members of the editorial team. Readers may use material here if acknowledgement is given to the Association, and *WN* is cited. Please cite as: Anon. Sugars, fats, the good life well led. What's it all about? [The issue] *World Nutrition* February 2014, **5**, 2, 101-107. Obtainable at www.wphna.org/worldnutrition. Contributions to *World Nutrition* are the copyright and responsibility of their authors. They should not be taken to be the view or policy of the World Public Health Nutrition Association (the Association) or of any affiliated or associated bodies, unless this is explicitly stated.