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Correspondence: The Food System

Big Food, Snack, and Tobacco

Sir: We congratulate Carlos Monteiro, Geoffrey Cannon, Fabio Gomes and colleagues, on their recent excellent commentaries (1-3). We represent ACT, the public interest non-government organisation (*Aliança de Controle do Tabagismo*, or Alliance for the Control of Tobacco Use) (4). ACT works primarily for the implementation in Brazil, of the tobacco control public policies agreed under the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the first global public health treaty negotiated under the auspices of the World Health Organization.

We have already used information and analysis from the commentaries cited here, in our presentations comparing differences and similarities between tobacco and other risk factors for non-communicable chronic diseases.

We agree with your authors, that success so far in control of Big Tobacco, which has resulted in a decrease on the prevalence of smoking in countries which have adopted tobacco control regulations, should be used by governments in relation to Big Food, Big Snack and Big Booze, particularly regarding the exclusion of such corporations and their representatives from negotiations related to the design of public health policies.

The tobacco control experience could be a paradigm to policy makers in the food and drink field. Unfortunately, as observed in the commentaries cited here, the reverse is happening. Tobacco industry strategies are serving as a paradigm for Big Food and Big Snack, which emulate and 'improve' such practices in order to evade serious and effective regulation.

ACT is an organisation focused on advocacy. So we are very interested in the debate about conflict of interest related to prevention and control of chronic diseases. We already support Brazilian public interest non-government organisations directly concerned with these issues, such as the Brazilian Institute for Consumer Defence (*Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor*, IDEC) and the Institute to Honour the Child (*Instituto Alana*).

We believe that creating and strengthening public health-oriented coalitions is necessary in order to fight against the vested interests of food and drink transnational and other conflicted corporations. If the World Public Health Nutrition Association wants to continue work in these areas, ACT is at your disposal.

References

- 1 Monteiro CA, Cannon G. The Food System. Ultra-processed products. Product reformulation will not improve public health. [Commentary]. *World Nutrition*, September 2012, **3**,9, 406-434. Obtainable at www.wphna.org
- 2 Monteiro C, Gomes F, Cannon G (2010) Can the food industry help tackle the growing burden of under-nutrition? The snack attack. *American Journal of Public Health* 2010, **100**: 975-981.
- 3 Monteiro CA, Cannon G. The impact of transnational 'Big Food' companies on the South: a view from Brazil. *PLoS Medicine* **9**(7): e1001252. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001252. Published 3 July 2012.
- 4 ACT. *Aliança de Controle do Tabagismo*. Please access www.actbr.org.br

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