

TACD

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Resolution on Food Advertising and Marketing to Children

A 2003 joint World Health Organization (WHO) / Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report highlighted the major public health threat of diet-related disease. The influence of advertising was among the range of factors that were identified as having a negative effect on health. The WHO states that governments have a responsibility to ensure that advertising is not misleading, is informative, and is unlikely to contribute to ill-health and obesity, a particular concern in the case of children.

There is much support for the idea of restricting advertising to children, and that support will grow if the problems are not effectively tackled.

Food advertising

- TACD calls on the European Union (EU) and US Government to recognize the potential health impact of food advertising and review existing codes of practice and / or regulations on advertising of food to ensure that advertising supports, rather than undermines, nutrition and public health goals. Such rules should ensure that food advertising does not undermine progress towards national dietary improvement by misleading or confusing consumers or by unfairly setting bad examples. In particular, advertisements, either individually or collectively, should not encourage excessive consumption of foods that are high in fat, sugar and /or salt.
- Food advertising regulations should be consistent with food labelling regulations.

Food Marketing and Advertising to Children

- Children require special consideration and protection with respect to advertising. Childhood obesity and associated type 2 diabetes are now major issues across the EU and US and measures are needed to help tackle this and protect against health problems in later life.

- The EU and US Government should therefore introduce restrictions on the advertising and marketing of foods to children that protect them from misleading and unfair advertising, marketing and promotional activities, through whatever media.
- Advertising of high calorie, 'energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods [foods high in fat, sugar and /or salt] should be restricted during television programming commonly viewed by significant numbers of children.
- Advertising regulations should take account of the age of the likely child audience, with younger children requiring greater protection.
- The EU and US Government should use advertising and marketing tools to actively promote healthier eating among children ('social marketing'), and help them separate fact from marketing hype. This should include funding initiatives in broadcast media, in schools, and in the broader community.
- The EU and US Government should also consider the effect of, and ensure the adequacy of controls upon, marketing that uses devices such as 'free gifts' and celebrity or cartoon link-ups to encourage consumption of energy-rich foods and drinks, high in fat, sugar and / or salt.
- Guidelines for commercial activities in schools need to be developed and implemented to prohibit marketing of energy-rich foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and / or salt in schools, e.g. through sponsorship and collector schemes.

Enforcement

- Agencies within the US and EU Member States should ensure that systems are in place to enforce compliance with advertising regulations. Broadcast advertisements should be pre-vetted and violations should be promptly addressed so that advertisements are stopped before they are widely disseminated to the public.
- Effectively-enforced sanctions should be imposed to deter future misleading advertisements, including corrective advertising and monetary penalties.
- There should be greater regulatory co-operation between the EU and US governments and advertising regulatory agencies to facilitate enforcement and to notify other countries when an advertisement has been stopped.