



## International **Obesity** TaskForce

# Guiding Principles for Reducing the Commercial Promotion of Foods and Beverages to Children ('Sydney Principles')

## Consultation on Draft Principles

### The issue

The epidemic of obesity is affecting the health and well-being of many millions of children around the world in affluent and less affluent countries alike. There are many drivers of this pandemic with an important one being the high levels of commercial marketing of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods and beverages that specifically target young children. Numerous studies and several reviews have concluded that these marketing strategies clearly contribute to the unhealthy diets which are promoting childhood obesity. This commercial marketing also undermines the healthy eating messages in the dietary guidelines of every country and is contrary to the objectives of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health which has been endorsed by 192 countries.

There is a consensus that multi-strategy approaches will be needed to reduce childhood obesity. Many governments, non-government organisations, food, beverage and advertising industries, and international organisations like WHO are now actively examining strategies to reduce commercial marketing to children as an important and integral part of a multi-pronged approach to this rapidly increasing problem.

### International Obesity Taskforce & International Association for the Study of Obesity

IOTF and IASO are promoting global action on commercial marketing to children through two complementary initiatives. As part of the Global Prevention Alliance, a coalition of international non-government organisations, IOTF and IASO are calling on WHO and its Member States to develop an International Code of Marketing of Food and Beverages to Children. In addition, an IOTF Working Group is developing a set of underlying principles to guide action to substantially reduce commercial promotions that target children. The first draft was launched at the International Congress on Obesity in Sydney in September 2006 and, following feedback from delegates, the second draft of these 'Sydney Principles' is now out for global consultation.

### Scope

1. The Principles do not relate to non-commercial promotion of healthy eating, for example government-funded social marketing campaigns.
2. The UN Convention on Rights of the Child defines a 'child' as under the age of 18 years but recognises that, for different situations, a 'child' may be defined as 18 or a younger age. The age at which restrictions in commercial promotions to children applies to needs to be debated. A stepped approach for children and adolescents may be possible.
3. Debate is also needed about the products that restrictions would apply to: either
  - i. energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods and beverages, or
  - ii. all foods and beverages, or
  - iii. all products.



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# Guiding Principles for Reducing the Commercial Promotion of Foods and Beverages to Children ('Sydney Principles')

### Draft Principles

#### Actions to reduce commercial promotions to children should:

1. **SUPPORT THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN.** Regulations need to align with, and progress, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Rome Declaration on World Food Security which endorse the rights of children to adequate, safe and nutritious food.
2. **AFFORD SUBSTANTIAL PROTECTION TO CHILDREN.** Children are particularly vulnerable to commercial exploitation, and regulations need to be sufficiently powerful to provide them with a high level of protection. Child protection is the responsibility of every section of society – parents, governments, civil society, and the private sector.
3. **BE STATUTORY IN NATURE.** Only statutory regulations have sufficient authority to reduce the volume of marketing to children and the negative impact that this has on their diets. Industry self regulation is not designed to achieve this goal.
4. **TAKE A WIDE DEFINITION OF COMMERCIAL PROMOTIONS.** Regulations need to encompass all types of commercial targeting of children (e.g. television advertising, print, sponsorships, competitions, loyalty schemes, product placements, competitions, internet) and be sufficiently flexible to include new marketing methods as they develop.
5. **GUARANTEE COMMERCIAL-FREE CHILDHOOD SETTINGS.** Regulations need to ensure that schools and other child care and education settings are free from commercial promotions that specifically target children.
6. **INCLUDE CROSS BORDER MEDIA.** International agreements will be needed to regulate cross-border media such as internet, satellite and cable television, and free-to-air television from neighbouring countries.
7. **BE EVALUATED, MONITORED AND ENFORCED.** The impact of regulations on children's dietary patterns needs to be evaluated when instituted and the ongoing compliance with regulations needs to be monitored and enforced.

#### Feedback (please distribute this through your own networks):

The IOTF Working Group is seeking your feedback on the Principles and their scope of application (definitions of age and products covered). It is recognised that existing regulations fall far short of these Principles in all countries and that it will take years to progress the agenda of protecting children from the negative impacts of the commercial promotion of the foods and beverages that are promoting childhood obesity. Therefore, we ask you to critique these as guiding principles for a long term vision – will they keep us on the right track to create a better world for the children of the future?

Please provide your feedback at: [www.iotf.org/sydneyprinciples](http://www.iotf.org/sydneyprinciples) by 30 March 2007