

## The creation of Rules for Control of the Advertising of Food Products is a decisive step toward success in the combat against malnutrition and child obesity

Because they are individuals still subject to development and also because they don't yet have the capacity to have sound judgement on important issues, children need legal effective protection against marketing abuse. Thus, there is an urgent need for the creation of rules to control all advertising of food products, similar to the rules developed by the organization "Consumers International". This instrument should be based on solid arguments and be backed up by a trustworthy institution.

With this in mind, "Instituto Alana", through its "Child/ Food Consumption Project" and joining efforts with other partners and citizens who have a commitment with the welfare of children, is now appealing to the WHO to take upon itself the creation of this code of rules. In protecting children from malnutrition and obesity forming highly endowed citizens and unburdening public funds, this initiative will certainly guarantee a healthy development also for the country's Economy.

### Child/Food Consumption Project Instituto Alana`

"Instituto Alana" through its "Child/Food Consumption Project" has established, as its mission, the development of a judicious conscience on the part of all society regarding the issue of the pernicious effects brought on by the absurd amount of marketing communication addressed to children and their relationship with consumption.

<sup>1</sup> Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária

### Seductive messages associate junkfood to social ascension.

The vulnerability of low income population offers "a field day" for marketing people who are forever adding to their array of strategies to attract investments from this part of the public. In relation to industrialized food products, they resort to visual appeals, the help of famous characters and the offer of gifts and various emotional appeals in order to induce children to form unhealthy feeding habits. The result is that a bag of salted goodies with practically non-existent nutritional value, besides being more practical to carry and store, becomes more enticing and accessible than a healthy food product of the same price.



## Junkfood plus marketing addressed to children plus faulty laws : This formula is bringing malnutrition to Brazilian children



Something is terribly wrong when the poverty diminishes in a country but, at the same time, child malnutrition increases. And it's even worse when 30% of all Brazilian children are overweight and 15% are already obese. In Brazil malnutrition has only changed its generating factor. Whenever it detects new market niches in the less affluent populations marketing acts fast, inducing children to see the meaning of a better life in the everyday

**15% - or 5.957,859 – of all Brazilian children are already obese, and 30% are overweight**  
*(Sociedade Brasileira de Pediatria)*

and excessive of industrialized food products. Fooled by these seductive messages, the children migrate from a scenario of hunger to a picture of ever increasing overweight and obesity. To make matters even worse, the laws regulating advertising addressed to children has not been working. Defeated by economic interests, actions taken by the authorities on this problem, which were gaining ground, have lost their vigor, making the road to the prohibition of junkfood advertising for children even longer, harder, and bumpier.

Hence the extreme need for the WHO to take a determined and bold stance in confronting this issue, which is also a threat to public health

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# Figures illustrating the weight carried by the barrage of food products advertisements targeted at children

## Child overweight is strongly associated to commercial bombardment

A study carried out at the University of São Paulo in 2007 pointed out that 82% of all TV commercials suggest the immediate consumption of food products; 78% of them showing individuals in the act of eating them, and 24% of the students exposed to these messages were overweight or obese. The same study disclosed moreover that the act of watching TV for more than 2 hours a day was associated to an increase in BMI among boys.

## Children do not understand the persuasive character of these messages

According to a report (2004) published by the American Association of Psychology it is only after they reach the age of twelve that children can completely recognize the contents of entertainment commercials and understand that the message aims at selling something to them.

The 2008 annual report from IBOPE (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics) reveals that the average daily time that Brazilian children between 4 and 11 years of age are exposed to TV is 4:54', an alarming datum when compared to the 4:26' that children dedicate to school activities in the country (statistics made in 2009 by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation). Added to this is the fact that over 70% of all publicity campaigns (Ministry of Health, June of 2008) offer unhealthy foods and beverages.

## Healthy foods are more and more being replaced by sugar confections

Only 25.2% of children between 2 and 5 years of age, and 38.3% of children between 5 and 10 years of age consume fruits and vegetables (Ministry of Health, 2009). To make this scenario even worse, 26.6% of them stated that they consume caramels cookies with fillings and other types of sweets between 5 and 7 times a week. Research carried out by Datafolha (Research Institute) point out that children aged from 3 to eleven years consume biscuits (82%), soft drinks (70%) and salty tidbits some times every week. Parallel to these data 75% of parents agreed that the offer of gifts and prizes really has an influence on the kids' choice of food.

## Today nutritional transition has become nothing but a passage from malnutrition to obesity

While, on one hand, caloric and proteic dearth in Brazilian children has decreased 72%, on the other hand the incidence of obesity in children and adolescents is increasing. Research Studies show that, today, 15% of Brazilian children – totaling close to 6 million – are obese and 30% are overweight. These studies show that people who live in Brazilian shantytowns and slums are also subjected to nutrition disorders such as obesity and overweight brought about by the barrage of commercials hurled at them

<sup>1</sup> Brazilian Public Opinion and Statistics Institute - <sup>2</sup> Getúlio Vargas Foundation - <sup>3</sup> Ministry of Health - <sup>4</sup> Research Institute

# What can be done to protect children from malnutrition and obesity

## Children's health should be more important than the interests of the food industry

Several sectors of society and the Brazilian government itself have been acting on behalf of the elaboration of a more restrictive set of regulations regarding advertisements of unhealthy foodstuffs and beverages directed to children. But due to the strong and powerful pressure exerted by the economic interests of food industries, as well as by the advertising sector, important actions planned by the Government towards this end were put in the back burner in favor of promises of self regulations on the part of the Market. However, the Public Commitment to Self-regulation and a Responsible Marketing signed in Brazil is not being complied with, since several companies have not at all modified their commercial practices and communication strategies directed to children,



## A healthy economy should comprise the concept of alimentary security

Alimentary Security deals not only with fighting malnutrition but also to controlling consumption of unhealthy noxious foods and non-alcoholic beverages.

It should guarantee the right to regular and permanent access to good quality food products and healthy alimentary habits that respect cultural diversity and are socially economically and environmentally sustainable (U. N. Food and Agriculture Organization)