Junking the Junk

Round table meeting
Food Safety and Toxins
November 1, 2011
Centre for Science & Environment, New Delhi
About Centre for Science and Environment

- CSE has been working for over a decade on issues related to food safety and environmental toxins
- The Pollution Monitoring Laboratory has been the key to taking forward the work of the institution
- The lab was set up in 2000 with the state of the art equipment for pesticide residues, heavy metal and air pollution monitoring
- The lab does research as well as supports community work

The lab in the last ten years has worked on issues that - Concerns our health. Our bodies. Our children
CSE’s Soft Drink Study: 2003

- CSE tested soft drinks for pesticides in 2003
- The study raised the issue of very high levels of caffeine, sugar and phosphorus
- It also raised the issue of increasing sales on soft drinks especially among children
- High sugar diet promotes tooth decay and obesity; increases risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke and heart disease
- A Joint Parliamentary Committee was formed to look into the CSE study; JPC ordered regular revision of soft drink standards but that is not happening
- It however did lead to the setting up of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the apex food regulatory body
CSE’s Trans Fats Study: 2009

- CSE tested 30 samples of branded cooking oil in 2009
- Seven leading vanaspati brands were 5 to 12 times higher than the two per cent standards for trans fats set by Denmark
- Denmark is the only country that has any norms on trans fats
- Vanaspati, the most common cooking oil medium, leaves the Indian food with higher trans fatty acids as compared to western food
- Trans fats is bad for the heart as it reduces the amount of good cholesterol (HDL); it increases the risk of diabetes and Alzheimer’s along with chances of breast cancer and infertility in women
- FSSAI proposed setting limits of trans fats to 10 per cent and then reducing it to five per cent in three years; it is still in the pipeline
CSE’s Energy Drinks Study: 2011

- Eight brands of energy drinks like Red Bull, Coca Cola’s Burn, Tzinga, Cloud 9 were tested for caffeine levels
- The Central Committee on Food Standards (CCFS) set a limit for caffeine at 145 ppm in carbonated beverages
- Energy Drinks were found to contain almost double the level of caffeine in the drinks at about 320 ppm
- FSSAI is setting standards for energy drinks and it is likely to approve a 320 ppm safe limit
- How can 320 ppm be safe for energy drinks while CCFS set 145 ppm as the safe limit for carbonated beverages
Why should we be concerned about Junk Food

• The fast food industry is estimated at between Rs 6750 crore to Rs 8000 crore
• It is growing at a compound annual growth rate of 35-40% annually
• Heavy advertising and marketing is increasing the consumer base of junk food
• There are no regulations and controls on advertising and marketing of junk food
• Junk food is unregulated in the country
Why should we be concerned about Junk Food…

- Junk food causes obesity and diabetes. It increases the risk of hypertension, osteoporosis, prostate and breast cancer. A latest study has found that junk food causes infertility among males.
- Study shows that 1 in 5 adults are obese; In India nearly 51 million are suffering from diabetes.
- Junk food increases the burden of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs)- high blood pressure, obesity/overweight and high cholesterol are the main components.
- In 2005, NCDs accounted for 53% of the total mortality and 44% of disability adjusted life years (DALYs) lost in India.
- This is likely to rise to 67% of total mortality by 2030.
Why should we be concerned about Junk Food...

- The PIL filed by Uday Foundation on banning junk food in schools is being heard at the Delhi High Court

- The FSSAI has agreed in principle to ban the junk food but it is yet to give a complete plan of action

- We need to engage in a discussion to find ways to deal with junk food
THANK YOU