

Food claims: Strategy to promote processed food (HFSS) consumption

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Loaded equations (in favor of poor health) in recent times

- Science = jargons for common man
- Science = evolving (changing)= lack of clarity
- Confusion = better sales
- More information= good or misguidance ?
 - Plethora of terms (low fat, fat free, reduced, very low...)
- Added 'nutrients' to junk foods = better sales
- **Time shortage** = better for industry
- Nanny state allegation – consumer empowered (actually more confused)
- Fragmented POLICY – Food and nutrition, Public Health, Environment, Industry = concerted effort-long way to go





What are we dealing with?

- Federal Trade Commission (FTC, 2007) reported \$9.6 billion spent on marketing food and beverages.
 - \$1.7 billion was spent on marketing specifically targeted to children and adolescents, most of which promotes items such as sugared breakfast cereals, fast food, and soft drinks.
- Strategic positioning of HFSS in aisles and super markets etc
- Average young person views more than 40000 television ads per year.
 - Young people are also exposed to promotional messages via the Internet, magazines, and video games.



This avalanche of marketing persuades children to prefer, request, and consume calorie-dense, nutrient-poor food and has triggered urgent calls for change.

In addition some bitter-sweet facts!

- Development (?)
- Increases in wealth and purchasing power
- Globalization, urbanization
- Agricultural modernization
- Nutrition transition towards HFSS and other westernized products
- Local regional diets being replaced by non diverse packaged ultra processed foods
- Food composition data incomplete and not robust
- Funding for public health nutrition is miniscule in front of Big Foods, Big Pharma
- Monitoring and quality control highly compromised in many places

These changes potentially threaten our food supply—as an ecological system becomes less diverse, it becomes more fragile and likely to fail.

What can be or should be done?

- Invest in high quality unbiased nutrition research
 - Academia/ researchers / scientists should keep public health and understanding in mind
 - Minimize confusion, transparency in methods
 - Improved govt infrastructure for promoting public health nutrition research
- Dissemination in simple meaningful way for common man
- Faster decisions at various steps for policy formation.
- Industry advertising (esp for HFSS) should be banned or very strictly regulated (as per given/devised standards)
- Effective surveillance, monitoring, quality control parameters to be in place

Standards for Self-Regulatory Activities of the Food Industry

- **Transparency**

- Transparent self-regulatory standards created by a combination of scientists (not paid by industry)
- No one party given disproportionate power or voting authority

- **Meaningful objectives and benchmarks**

- Specific codes of acceptable behaviors based on scientifically justified criteria
- Predefined benchmarks to ensure the success of self-regulation ;

- **Accountability and objective evaluation**

- Mandatory public reporting of adherence to codes, full compliance with pledges and attainment of key benchmarks
- Built-in and transparent procedures for outside parties to register objections to self-regulatory standards
- Objective evaluation of self-regulatory benchmarks by credible outside groups
- Periodic assessments/audits to determine compliance and outcomes

- **Oversight**

- Possible oversight by an appropriate global regulatory or health body (e.g., World Health Organization)