

**Food Industry Group
Annual Report 2010/2011**
19th April 2011

Throughout the 2010-11 year, the Food Industry Group (FIG) has continued to monitor the issue of obesity in New Zealand and the world, to work alongside the Ministry of Health, NGOs and other local and international stakeholders, and to participate in making a contribution to finding long term solutions to the problem.

This work has been undertaken on behalf of our membership - food sector businesses, associated media and advertising representatives.

Industry Initiatives:

Government-Industry Understanding

In September 2010, FIG made a presentation to the Minister of Health, Hon Tony Ryall. This was to familiarize him with FIG's objectives, the industry's very successful self-regulatory codes for advertising, and child-oriented media initiatives. Attending food manufacturers and retailers took the opportunity to outline recent projects such as the "Eat Wise & Exercise" and the "Fresh FoodKids" campaigns. In return, the Minister conveyed the Government's position on the obesity issue and expectations of the food industry.

In December 2010, FIG combined with ANZA to review and submit to the Ministry's background paper – a draft for consultation on: Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Healthy Children.

Members' Programmes

Many of FIG's food sector members continued their programmes of product reformulations, reviews of ingredients and manufacturing techniques in order to produce healthier food products which would be acceptable to the market. Several member organisations try to address some of the other precursors to obesity by having ongoing staff, customer and community education, lifestyle or sporting programmes. Examples of all this work was included in a report "Capturing the Change" which was distributed to the Ministry of Health in February 2011 and is available on www.fig.org.nz.

New Children's Advertising Codes

A new Children's Code for Advertising Food was launched by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in April 2010. The developmental process was undertaken by a panel of public, industry and government representatives. Forty-six submissions were received. The new code gives clear guidance on food advertising with strong appeal to children. It specifies and reinforces the high degree of responsibility expected and clarifies what is and isn't permissible in these food advertisements.

The Advertising Standards Complaints Board considered just one complaint concerning food advertising to children during the year. It concerned water and was settled by the advertiser. There were two other complaints upheld under the Code for the Advertising of Food – these involved an energy drink and a breakfast cereal.

Advertising within Children's Programming on Television

During the year the Television Broadcasters Council (now referred to as ThinkTV) reviewed its "Getting it Right for Children" advertising policy. As a result of this work ThinkTV published revised advertising guidelines in March 2011. These include a Children's Food (CF) Classification System, which further restricts the advertising of certain foods and beverages in children's programming times.

As part of this process, ThinkTV announced that free-to-air television was extending the hours of Children's Programming on Channels 2, 4 & 7 - an increase of 107%. This schedule currently provides 55 hours 15 minutes of advertising-free zones and 44 hours 15 minutes of restricted-advertising zones.

ThinkTV's "Getting it Right for Children" policy is in support of the Government's Healthy Eating - Healthy Action plan and consolidates a 2007 agreement between broadcasters and Government. These announcements were well received by the public and the Minister of Health who issued a positive press statement.

Foundation for Advertising Research

In September 2010, Jeremy Irwin was FIG's representative at a conference for the Foundation for Advertising Research in Noosa. His presentation detailed how FIG was a good example of successful industry self-regulation; its efforts being invaluable in the war on obesity. This information was well received by all delegates who came from as far away as the USA, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand.

International Trends

ANZA's FIG members had the benefit of hearing Stephan Loerke, MD of the World Federation of Advertisers, speak in February 2011. His presentation stressed that the way we approach marketing was being dramatically challenged by the interconnectedness of all communications around the world, the way consumers relate to brands, and worldwide political and economic reordering. Included in the many salient points he made was the message that food marketers must continue to work hard to show leadership by being proactive on the obesity issue, taking responsibility and demonstrating that they are addressing the issue. He predicted that to do otherwise would definitely undermine the perceived legitimacy of food marketing.

Communications

While there have been a number of serious distractions for Government over the past year, FIG has continued to communicate industry developments and international perspectives on obesity. This has been done directly or via FIG's regular email newsletter, NewsBites. FIG continues to confirm that just as the causes of obesity are multifaceted so are the potential solutions. FIG has continued to provide information and balance on the subject of obesity in New Zealand and worldwide through interviews, media commentary and media releases.

Conclusion

Industry, broadcasters and other representative bodies have continued their efforts to help reduce obesity in New Zealand. FIG has working closely with them and organizations such as the ASA to ensure that New Zealand's robust self-regulatory regime is recognized as the most efficient and effective way of ensuring responsible advertising.

International developments are being influenced by the World Health Organisation (WHO) calling on governments to get involved in curbing food marketing. The issue is bound to feature in global policy-making. FIG believes this would be unnecessary in New Zealand where the food industry has taken a proactive and responsible stance, and continues to demonstrate the effectiveness of our self-regulatory system.

It's important to constantly stress that obesity is caused and influenced by a large number of lifestyle and attitudinal factors. Removing the right to advertise responsibly isn't going to make the obesity problem go away.

Jeremy Irwin
Chairman
Food Industry Group