

# Food and Fags

**Tobacco and food:  
similarities and differences**

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# Introduction

- Half of all deaths in NZ each year (30% diet, 18% tobacco).
- Tobacco most readily preventable cause of death
- NZ: sixth highest obesity rate in world
- Negative effects of obesity and tobacco
- Welcome attention on tobacco - but not on food

# Two questions

- Are lessons from tobacco control helpful in addressing problems caused by unhealthy diets?

**Yes**

- Is the food industry making sufficient health promoting changes?

**No**

# Last two centuries of food and tobacco in NZ

- Both industries central to development of NZ economy
- Food remains key to economy; tobacco marginal
- Gradual consolidation of production
- Diversification of marketing and promotion

# Food industry

- Economy dependent on food production since colonisation: provisioning of ships, exports
- Initial production and exports by Maori
- Chinese market gardeners from late 19th century
- Sheep critical to NZ's economy, refrigeration transformed the industry in 1880s; leading export until 1980s
- Dairy industry began in 1840s, first dairy factories 1880s, now huge – most for export
- Other export foods – apples, kiwi fruit, fish

# Tobacco industry

- Introduced product; early form of bartering
- Duties on imports - source of revenue since 1830s
- Domestic production from 1860s; Nelson/Motueka
- Manufactured cigarettes introduced in 1880s
- First cigarette factory in 1906
- Growth in consumption, especially after world wars; recent growth in roll-your-owns
- Deregulation of 1980s and 1990s led to end of NZ tobacco production

# Food industry

- Major export, esp dairy – exporting saturated fat
- Food and grocery sector more relevant for health
- \$15 billion in retail sales; employs 148,000, 5% of GDP
- Food Industry Group (FIG) encourages food companies to work with Govt and the community to help solve the obesity epidemic (issue)
- FIG responsible for the Food Industry Accord signed with MoH in 2004

# FIG approach to obesity

- Encourages a united approach
- Puts emphasis on those most at risk
- Places emphasis on education for a healthy diet
- Places greater importance on the activity side of energy-in and energy-out.

# Food industry beliefs

- ***“It is important to balance intervention against the rights of individual consumers to purchase and consume legal food products.***
- ***There is no such thing as a bad food, only a bad diet. To highlight certain foods as being ‘bad’ and using a tobacco model to try and ban certain foods, is not relevant to foods.***
- ***Ultimately, people have to control what they eat, eating only enough for our health”***

# Food industry

Voluntary, self monitoring and self regulatory approach

Industry initiatives include:

- food reformulation
- nutritional guidelines for new products
- changes in marketing and advertising policies
- community (sports) sponsorships
- educational materials,
- reduction in serving sizes,
- CF Rating System for Advertising of Food on TV
- Front of Pack Labelling on percentages etc

# Top 10 supermarket items, 2008

1. **Coca-Cola 1.5l**
2. Wattie's spaghetti
3. **Coca-Cola 2.25l**
4. **QB Nature's Fresh white toast**
5. Wattie's baked beans
6. **Dole bobby bananas**
7. **Tip Top super soft white toast**
8. **Sprite lemonade 1.5l**
9. **QB Molenberg original toast**
10. Coke Zero 1.5l

# Tobacco industry

- Much smaller than food Industry
- Three major companies: BAT (75% market share – pre-tax profits \$144 million, 130 staff), Imperial, Philip Morris; all overseas owned
- Focus on low price “value” cigarette brands, targeting the poor
- \$1.7 billion in sales each year; \$1 billion in taxes
- 8000 retail outlets; up to 20% of store profits

# Tobacco and food - similarities

- Driven by profit – and growth
- Stress: Personal responsibility, tame scientists, undermining science, promoting self regulation, lobbying, promoting safer products, downplaying influence on children, cross over of personnel; sports stars; promoting healthier alternatives; influencing professional organisations
- Corporate responsibility, e.g. McDonalds, BATNZ

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# Tobacco and food – similarities (cont'd)

- Powerfully organised, politically astute, well connected: Food and Grocery Council and Tobacco Institute
- Focus on users, not on producers or marketers; reject serious controls, accept soft options
- Rationale for intervening is the same: market failures, information failures, externalities

# Tobacco and food - differences

- Tobacco unnecessary, food essential
- Selling tobacco to children is illegal
- Tobacco addictive, addictive power of food constituents to be determined
- Food industry much more complex, more diverse; causal pathways less direct
- Working with tobacco industry unacceptable; working with food industry acceptable

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# Tobacco and food – differences

(Cont'd)

- Food industry can blame physical inactivity; “no good or bad foods – only bad diets”
- Food industry promotions more accepted e.g. dental clinics, athletic events
- Opportunities for expansion, esp fast foods;
- Healthy diets possible, not much more expensive
- Public support for controlling food industry limited
- Co-benefits of healthy diets

# Lessons from tobacco control

- Comprehensive policies required: phased
- Reduce supply and demand; focus on effective interventions
- NGOs, social movements and media are critical
- Government leadership essential
- Research, monitoring and evaluation of progress important
- International leadership helpful
- Takes time, effort and resources

# An irreconcilable conflict?

“Eat food, not too much, mostly plants”

Vs

Food industry goals of profit and growth

# Division of responsibilities

- **Government** ➤ Leadership and coordination
- **Food Industry** ➤ Produce affordable, acceptable & accessible food
- **NGOs** ➤ Set direction
- **Public health professionals** ➤ Provide scientific underpinning

# Two health goals

1. Curb the tobacco industry: promote Vision 2020 for a tobacco-free Aotearoa
2. Harness the food industry for healthy eating for all