



World Consumer Rights Day 2015: Consumers Rights to Healthy Food

Briefing no. 1

Overview

About Consumers International

Established in 1960, CI is the world federation of consumer rights groups. Our goal is to ensure that consumer rights can never be ignored. With over 240 Member organisations spanning 120 countries, we serve as the only independent and authoritative global voice for consumer rights. We are a registered UK charity.

Why the theme, Consumers' Rights to Healthy Food?

The world is facing a major health crisis.

Poor diets contribute to more than 11 million deaths annually and are now the number one global risk factor for death.¹ Premature illness and disability from diet-related diseases impoverishes families, hurts productivity and bankrupts health systems. The global economic impact from obesity alone is roughly US\$2.0 trillion, or 2.8 percent of global GDP, roughly equivalent to the global impact from smoking or armed violence, war, and terrorism.²

This isn't just a rich country problem. Diet related diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes are rising far faster in developing economies and resulted in more than eight million people dying before their sixtieth birthdays in low and middle-income countries in 2013 alone. We need a global transformation in the way people eat. All consumers need the right, not just to food, but to healthy food.

What needs to be done?

Healthy food supplies are increasingly undermined by the availability, accessibility and affordability of processed food products high in fat, sugar and salt. These products are also heavily promoted and marketed, undermining the market for more nutritious and local foods. Helping consumers to choose healthier diets requires changing the food environments in which people live.

There are a number of policies which we know can help to make a difference, however not enough countries are addressing these worrying trends.

CI is calling for a Global Convention to Protect and Promote Healthy Diets. This would involve World Health Organization (WHO) Member States signing a legal agreement, or treaty. By signing, each country would commit to a framework of policies that would define, promote and protect healthy diets and healthy food. These measures would include responsible food marketing, food and nutritional standards, nutrition labelling, reformulation of processed food to reduce fat, sugar and salt and use of taxes, subsidies or planning controls to support the consumption of healthy food.

CI published an example of what such a Global Convention would look like in May 2014.³ In November 2014 over 330 experts and civil society organisations around the world signed an [open letter](#) to the heads of WHO and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) ahead of the Second International Conference on Nutrition calling for a Global Convention.

How will WCRD 2015 help to promote consumers' rights to healthy food?

International action

CI is organising an international social media campaign using a campaign tool called Thunderclap to raise awareness of the need for a global treaty on food.

¹ Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2013) *GBD 2010 Arrow Diagram*. Available at: <http://vizhub.healthdata.org/irank/arrow.php>

² McKinsey (2014) *How the World Could Better Fight Obesity*. Available at: http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/economic_studies/how_the_world_could_better_fight_obesity

³ Consumers International and World Obesity Federation (2014) *Recommendations Towards a Global Convention to Protect and Promote Healthy Diets*. Available at: <http://www.consumersinternational.org/news-and-media/resource-zone/recommendations-towards-a-global-convention-to-protect-and-promote-healthy-diets/>

The campaign will launch on **23 February**. CI will send you a '[Thunderclap Guide](#)' with an explanation of what it is, how it works and how you can support the campaign. The Thunderclap 'goes off,' on Sunday 15 March (World Consumer Rights Day).

After 23 February, CI members will be able to:

- Pledge your support for the campaign on CI's Thunderclap page (we will include a link to the page in the Thunderclap Guide)
- Get as many people from your networks to support CI's Thunderclap campaign
- Research other organisations and individuals in your country who are active on this issue and ask them to support the campaign

National action

CI is asking our members to highlight the difficulties consumers face in choosing a healthy diet and call for measures that will support them. CI has prepared briefings (Briefings no 2-5) on the following focus areas:

- Reducing salt consumption
- Reducing sugar consumption
- Nutrition labelling on pre-packaged foods
- Healthy food in schools

What is the link between national actions and the international call for a global convention?

Tackling this global health crisis requires international and national action.

Nationally governments need to introduce a package of measures to have the most impact. Through national campaigns we can call for our governments to introduce these policies. However given the scale of the challenge we believe a legally binding treaty is needed to support government action. Many of these measures, including restrictions on marketing to children, improving nutrition labelling and improving the food supply are already recommended in global and regional health plans. However in order for these policies to stand the best chance of having an impact, they need to be used all together and applied widely.

Therefore we are asking CI Members to call on your governments to:

- act nationally to introduce national policies that protect and promote healthy diets;
- act internationally at the World Health Organisation to support an International Convention.

How will CI support its members?

CI can support members' campaigns by:

- **Sharing information between members.** We will share information about which members work on which issues, which countries already have policies that work well and which campaign actions have been successful.
- **Co-ordinating joint actions.** If members are working on similar issues, where appropriate CI will support co-ordination of campaigns towards large international food companies such as Coke, Kellogg's, and Nestle.
- **Highlighting members work.** CI will post reports of members work on our world map. The map will give profile to their actions and demonstrate how much the consumer movement is doing on this issue.

Please keep in touch!

Please send updates on your plans, pictures of your actions and any media coverage you generate to your regional contact point. See list below.

CI food e-network

The quickest and easiest way to stay in touch with information about WCRD from CI and other members is via the CI food e-network. To join the network simply send an e-mail with your name and the name of your organisation to aglayzer@consint.org If you like, we can always remove your address after WCRD.

Regional contact points

Region	Contact	Email
Africa	Xaverine	Xndikumagenge@consint.org
Asia and Pacific	Michelle	Mich@ciroap.org
Europe and North America	Elena	EdeLlaguno@consint.org
Latin America	Luis (before 23 Feb)	Lflores@consumidoresint.org
	Tamara (after 23 Feb)	Tmeza@consumidores.org
Middle East	Ahmed	aalharthy@consint.org

Timeline

Date	Details
Week beginning 16 February	All CI Members receive <ul style="list-style-type: none">• briefing papers in English, Spanish and French• WCRD logos to use as appropriate
23 February	All CI Members will receive the Thunderclap guide >>> Launch of CI's Thunderclap campaign>>>
Week beginning 9 March	As WCRD is on a Sunday, members in some countries may want to hold national events or release national press releases during the week before.
15 March	>>> World Consumer Rights Day! >>> The Thunderclap will go off!

What happens after WCRD?

15th March does not mark the end of this campaign for CI. We want to use the evidence, energy, stories, pictures and new supporters generated by WCRD to keep growing the campaign for a Global Convention.

The next challenge will be to make a big splash at the World Health Assembly 18th- 24th May 2015.

Further reading

The WHO [Global Action Plan](#) for the Prevention and Control of NCDs committed governments to reduce premature deaths from NCDs by 25% by 2025, but the [Status Report](#) published in January of this year stated that most countries are off course to meet their targets and progress remains uneven and inadequate.

Letter calling for a Global Convention signed by over 330 experts and civil society:

<http://www.consumersinternational.org/news-and-media/news/2014/11/open-letter-global-convention/>

[Obesity and the economics of prevention: Fit not Fat](#). OECD. 2010.

[How the world could better fight obesity](#). McKinsey&Co. 2014

[Obesity: Africa's new crisis](#). The Guardian. September, 2014.

[Nourishing framework. Policies to promote Healthy diets and reduce obesity](#). World Cancer Research Fund, 2014

[WHO Global Health Observatory Non Communicable Diseases](#) National and international data and interactive maps on non-communicable diseases and risk factors.

[UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food 2010](#) – Olivier de Schutter, 2014

“Unhealthy diets are now a greater threat to global health than tobacco. Just as the world came together to regulate the risks of tobacco, a bold framework convention on adequate diets must now be agreed.”

[UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights 2012 – 2015](#), Farida Shaheed, 2014

“Food advertising and promotion have contributed to shifting dietary patterns towards those closely linked with non-communicable diseases. By promoting mainly manufactured products with a high content of fat, sugar or salt, food and beverage companies contribute to altering previous eating and cooking practices that often were healthier and more ecologically sound. ... Safeguards need to be made more effective.”