

BIAC Comments to the OECD Food Chain Network Meeting on “Mobilising the Food Chain for Health”

25-26 October 2012, Paris

Consider food and health issues in the context of the entire food chain, in which the private sector plays a key role: The private sector plays a key role in mobilising the food chain for health by innovating, investing and producing in the food and agricultural sector. Meeting the growing challenges of the future, such as constrained resources, greater demand, and of course health-related challenges, will require focusing on innovation and efficiency across the supply chain, from production to distribution and consumption, thus improving food access and food products. Private sector know-how in the areas of innovation, science and technology, as well as good production and management practices, can be increasingly harnessed through effective partnerships with research institutions, farmers, policy-makers, and civil society.

The rise in obesity is a multi-factorial issue: The private sector underlines the importance of the multi-factorial nature of the obesity issue, thus requiring a multi-stakeholder response.

Guidance is needed for How to Eat, not What to Eat: Health literacy and consumer education is essential. A distinction should be borne in mind between commodities whose consumption is invariably unhealthy (e.g. tobacco) and commodities whose impact on health depends on how they are consumed (such as food). No single food can be blamed for the increase in obesity, for example, and there are no “good foods” or “bad foods”.

Physical activity is crucial: Governments should explore opportunities for encouraging greater physical activity among populations through civic planning, education, transportation and collaboration with other stakeholders.

Fiscal policy and restrictive measures: Fiscal policy and restrictive measures (e.g. bans on certain products) are not the most cost-effective tools for addressing obesity and can have unintended negative consequences. It is worth noting that the WHO report [“From Burden to ‘Best Buys’”](#) (2011) does *not* include any recommendation for taxes on specific food products.

Self-regulatory mechanisms make an important contribution: Over the past several years, business and industry have changed their policies to address health concerns, such

as the rise in obesity. These efforts are changing the advertising and marketing of products and establishing best practices for other companies to follow.

Wellness programs: Several workplace wellness programmes have proven to be successful in the helping the prevention of non-communicable diseases, and should be encouraged.