

Ms Katherine Rich
c/o Carole Inkster
Food and Beverage Industry Taskforce on Addressing Factors Contributing to Obesity
By email: carole.inkster@fgc.org.nz

Dear Ms Rich

Government response to the Food Industry Taskforce's Report

Thank you, as the secretariat representative of the Food Industry Taskforce on Addressing Factors Contributing to Obesity (the Taskforce), for providing us with the 'Final Report to Ministers of Health and Food Safety' (the Report) on 20 December 2018. We apologise for our delayed response.

We commend the Taskforce for bringing together a range of views across the food and beverage industry, and for achieving agreement within members about the future role of industry in contributing to reducing obesity in New Zealand.

Thank you also for your letter of 13 September 2019 providing an update on progress towards the recommendations. We acknowledge the significant amount of work that members of the food and beverage industry have already taken to address obesity, particularly in the areas of reformulation of food and beverages, uptake of the Health Star Rating labelling system, and development of company nutrition policies.

While you have been implementing the recommendations, the Government has instigated several initiatives that align with the Report, such as Healthy Active Learning, that includes the review and update of Health and Physical Education curriculum resources, and piloting the school lunch programme in 30 primary and intermediate schools. Both these initiatives are part of the Government's 2019 Wellbeing Budget. Also, in August 2019, trans-Tasman ministers responsible for food regulation asked Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to review labelling for added sugars.

We support the principles underlying the Report's recommendations. You may be aware of the recent release of the World Health Organization (WHO) publication 'Essential Nutrition Actions – mainstreaming nutrition through the life-course'. Several of your recommended actions are consistent with the WHO report, and we encourage you to prioritise the following workstreams in light of this new guidance:

WHO Essential Nutrition Actions	Taskforce Recommendations
Encouraging reformulation of food products to reduce the content of saturated fats, trans-fats, free sugars and salt/sodium	Recommendations 5,6,8 to set and review nutrient reformulation targets

Encouraging transnational, national and local food services and catering outlets to improve the nutritional quality of their foods, ensuring the availability and affordability of healthy choices and to review portion sizes and pricing	Recommendations 1,2 to develop industry nutrition policies Recommendations 47, 48 regarding voluntary menu labelling and customer information
Supporting point of sale information, including through nutrition labelling that ensures accurate, standardised and comprehensive information on nutrient contents in foods.	Recommendations 44, 45 to encourage greater uptake of Health Star Ratings Recommendation 50 regarding adoption of the outcomes of the Australia NZ Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation

We would also like you to review the following Taskforce recommendations in order to strengthen them further:

WHO Essential Nutrition Actions	Taskforce Recommendations
Implementing the WHO <i>Set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children</i>	Recommendations 32,33,34,35 regarding the marketing of food and beverages to children.

Formalising industry-government engagement

We propose formalising engagement between industry and government to take forward this important work to create healthier food environments and contribute to reducing obesity in New Zealand.

We consider close engagement to be beneficial because it recognises the important role of both parties in creating change, and signals a commitment to discuss and agree on actions to achieve common aspirations and goals.

Through our engagement we expect to identify common goals and establish a joint work programme. As part of this we would expect to progress actions within all the areas suggested in your Report and, together, identify interventions appropriate for New Zealand arising from the WHO Nutrition Actions. In particular, the Government wishes to progress focussed action in the following areas we consider priorities for addressing obesity:

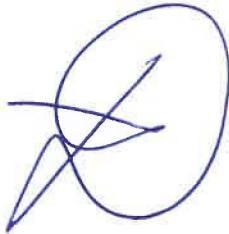
- food marketing - limiting advertising, marketing and sponsorship related to energy-dense, nutrient poor food and beverages
- improving reformulation and labelling of food and beverages
- creating healthier retail environments (e.g. limiting product placement and price promotions of energy-dense, nutrient poor food and beverages in supermarkets)
- instigating government-led monitoring and evaluation processes.

We propose starting with a number of actions, underpinned by accurate data, robust monitoring and evaluation. We consider that by working together our actions would be stronger and more purposeful.

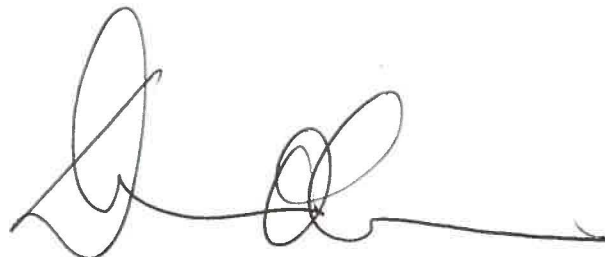
We would like to meet with you to discuss how ongoing government-industry engagement could work. Our offices will be in contact with you to set up a meeting.

Thank you once again for the Taskforce's important contribution to reducing obesity in New Zealand.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' with a horizontal line through it, followed by a vertical line and a small loop.

Hon Dr David Clark
Minister of Health

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, stylized 'D' with a horizontal line through it, followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Hon Damien O'Connor
Minister for Food Safety