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World's largest food companies urged to step up efforts on global nutrition crisis

Global Access to Nutrition Index ranks 22 largest companies on contributions to tackling obesity and undernutrition; Unilever leads 2016 ranking

Utrecht, The Netherlands - The world's largest food and beverage companies have made some progress towards improving consumers' diets but they still have a long way to go if they are to play their full part in tackling the mounting global nutrition crisis, a new report said today.

With one in three people worldwide either overweight or undernourished, the [Access to Nutrition Index](#) (ATNI) is based on the premise that companies can - and must - work alongside governments, international organizations and civil society to address the spiralling 'double burden' of undernutrition and obesity. They can do this by, among other things, producing healthier foods, making them more affordable and accessible and influencing consumer choice by marketing and labeling their products more responsibly.

"Given the global reach of their products, food and beverage companies have a critical role to play in helping to tackle the growing global health crisis caused by poor nutrition," said Inge Kauer, Executive Director of the Access to Nutrition Foundation, the not-for-profit organization that develops and publishes the Index. "While companies have a social responsibility to tackle global nutrition challenges, doing so also presents a business opportunity as consumers worldwide demand healthier foods."

The Global Access to Nutrition Index was first published in 2013 for use as an independent benchmarking tool by investors, health advocates and companies themselves. The 2016 Global Index is the second to be released. It evaluated each of the companies on its:

- Corporate strategy, management and governance related to nutrition
- Formulation and delivery of appropriate affordable and accessible products
- Positive influence on consumer choice and behaviour, through nutrition information, food marketing and labeling

The 2016 Global Access to Nutrition Index also assessed the policies and practices of the world's largest baby food manufacturers to gauge whether their marketing of breast-milk substitutes (BMS) aligns with international standards.

Key Findings of the 2016 Access to Nutrition Index

The 2016 Index concluded that, while some companies have taken positive steps since the last Index, the industry as a whole is moving far too slowly. Scored out of ten on their nutrition-related commitments, practices and levels of disclosure, no company achieved a score of more than 6.4.

The leading companies - Unilever, Nestlé and Danone - have done more than the others to integrate nutrition into their business models, to produce healthier products with, for example, lower levels of

sugar, salt and fats and higher levels of healthier ingredients, and to ensure affordable pricing and wider distribution of healthier products in emerging markets.

Mars and FrieslandCampina have risen the most on the 2016 Index. Mars rose from 16th to 5th and FrieslandCampina from 19th to 8th from their 2013 positions.

The report recommended that companies:

- Help tackle obesity by adopting stronger nutrition strategies and policies, using robust systems to measure the nutritional value of all of their products, tracking the proportion of revenues generated by healthier products, strengthening food labeling to help consumers identify healthier options, and marketing more responsibly to children.
- Address the serious problem of undernutrition in lower-income countries, in spite of the challenges presented by these fragile markets. As many companies have goals to expand their businesses in emerging economies they must work with governments and civil society to find innovative ways to provide affordable and accessible nutritious foods for poorer people. Only four of the companies were found to be producing specially fortified products targeting undernourished consumer groups in low-income countries such as women of childbearing age and young children.
- Apply strong policies that cover all key nutrition practices globally, not just in their home countries, to ensure consumers in emerging markets are treated equally.
- Companies producing baby foods should take steps to ensure they are fully compliant with the World Health Organization's International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (The Code) and subsequent guidelines so they do not negatively impact optimal infant nutrition by undermining breastfeeding.

Baby food manufacturer findings

The separate sub-ranking of six of the world's largest baby food manufacturers evaluated how well these companies' policies align with The Code and subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions - and how effectively their management systems implement their policies. This is of particular relevance in poorer countries where breastmilk can be a lifesaver for vulnerable infants.

The companies assessed for the BMS sub-ranking included four of the food companies evaluated in the global Access to Nutrition Index - Danone, FrieslandCampina, Heinz and Nestlé - and two pharmaceutical sector companies, Abbott and Mead Johnson. The research found that none of the six companies' policies assessed for this sub-ranking was fully compliant with The Code although there was significant variation in their performance. Research carried out for ATNI in Vietnam and Indonesia in the summer of 2015 by Westat, an independent research organization, revealed numerous examples of non-compliance with international standards in both countries, suggesting that all companies' policies and management systems need to be overhauled.

ATNI's report recommended that:

- Baby food companies should apply their BMS marketing policies consistently and globally, not just in 'higher-risk countries', which at present tends to be the case. Companies should also commit to upholding their own policies in markets where local regulation is weaker than company policy.

- In line with updated definitions of products that should be considered BMS, issued by WHO, companies' BMS marketing policies should be extended to apply to all types of breast-milk substitutes, including infant formula, complementary foods intended for infants under six months of age, follow-on milk and growing-up milk.
- The ATNI report also said stronger local regulation is needed in many countries to give legal effect to The Code, creating a 'level playing field' for all companies, local and multinational.

How the Index works

The research for the 2016 Global Access to Nutrition Index was provided by Sustainalytics, a leading global environmental, social and governance research and ratings firm. It combined publicly available company information with its own analysis and information provided by the companies. ATNF welcomed the increased level of engagement from the food and beverage industry: 17 of the 22 companies actively engaged with the research for the 2016 Index.

The ATNI methodology used to assess the companies is largely based on international standards and guidelines. After the first Index in 2013 it was extended and refined, drawing on extensive consultations with companies, nutrition experts, investors, policy-makers and civil society. As a result, for the 2016 Index, companies were evaluated against a more rigorous and comprehensive set of metrics than in the previous Index.

"The Global Access to Nutrition Index is increasingly being embraced as an accountability tool by companies and investors to measure – and ultimately improve – their performance on promoting better nutrition," said Keith Bezanson, Chair of the Board of the Access to Nutrition Foundation.

Notes to Editors

- To view the full report, please visit <http://www.accesstonutrition.org>.

Key nutrition statistics:

- Almost 2 billion people are now overweight - 600 million of them obese - with major health implications such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.
- Almost 800 million people do not have enough to eat and another 2 billion people suffer from micronutrient deficiencies or 'hidden hunger'.
- Obesity costs the global economy approximately US\$2 trillion annually, nearly 3 % of global GDP
- The global packaged food industry grew to US\$2.4 trillion in 2014, growing ten times faster in emerging and lower-income markets than in high-income countries.

About the Access to Nutrition Index

The Access to Nutrition Index is published by the Access to Nutrition Foundation (ATNF), an independent non-profit organisation based in the Netherlands dedicated to objectively assessing and improving the contribution the private sector makes to addressing global nutrition challenges. The primary objective of ATNF is to publish, on a regular basis, a set of Indexes that assess and rates major food and beverage manufacturers' nutrition policies, practices and disclosure. The Index methodology is developed with input from a wide range of global stakeholders including the World Health Organisation, academia, civil society organizations, industry and investors. Since the launch in 2013, more than 40 investment firms have become signatories to the ATNI Investor Statement, with

over \$3 trillion assets under management. The Index is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation.

Overall ranking

While the methodology has been strengthened since the first Index in 2013, the same weight is assigned to each Category as in 2013, to facilitate comparison.

The ranking assesses companies across seven different categories:

- A Governance (12.5%) Corporate strategy, management and governance
- B Products (25%) Formulation of appropriate products
- C Accessibility (20%) Delivering affordable, accessible products
- D Marketing (20%) Responsible marketing policies, compliance (and spending)
- E Lifestyles (2.5%) Supporting healthy diets and active lifestyles
- F Labeling (15%) Product labeling and use of health and nutrition claims
- G Engagement (5%) Influencing governments and policymakers and stakeholder engagement

GLOBAL INDEX 2016 OVERALL RANKING
