

Multinational food companies exploited the COVID-19 pandemic to market unhealthy products.

Language English

GHAJ

The Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAJ) has gathered more than [280 examples, from 18 countries](#) [1], of tactics by Big Food to promote their unhealthy products throughout the COVID-19 crisis in a recent report.

Industry actions during the pandemic perpetuate the threat of NCDs and undermine progress by governments and civil society organizations to create a healthier food environment globally. GHAJ's findings complement the findings of ["Signaling Virtue, Promoting Harm."](#) [2] a recent report from the NCD Alliance and the SPECTRUM Consortium.

As COVID-19 spreads globally, countries are faced with a double burden of both the disease and high rates of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Despite their unhealthy products contributing to this epidemic, ultra-processed food and beverage companies have used the pandemic to promote their goods and further their image as good corporate citizens while directly and indirectly influencing policy.

Tactics documented in GHAJ's report include:

- Answering the need for food, particularly for the most vulnerable populations in low-income countries struggling with increased social needs and economic challenges, by donating unhealthy, packaged ultra-processed foods and drinks;
- Employing marketing campaigns linking their unhealthy products to charitable causes;
- Using messages appealing to nostalgia and emotions to promote snack consumption at home;
- Promoting unhealthy products as essential to households, even though these products do not fulfil nutritional needs.

The COVID-19 complications posed by obesity, NCDs and malnutrition emphasise the urgent need for healthy food policies worldwide. The responses of Big Food, directly and indirectly, undermined public health. Governments and CSOs must work to stop the industry's interference in healthy food policy and work to enact policies to ensure a healthier future.

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[Read the report](#) [1]

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Category - News: Announcements

Related Resource: [Signalling Virtue, Promoting Harm - Unhealthy commodity industries and COVID-19](#) [3]

Related Link: [Facing Two Pandemics: How Big Food Undermined Public Health in the Era of COVID-19](#) [1]

Related Content: [New report details hundreds of examples of unhealthy commodity industries leveraging the COVID-19 pandemic](#) [4]

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Links

[1] <https://advocacyincubator.org/two-pandemics/>

[2] <https://ncdalliance.org/resources/signalling-virtue-promoting-harm>

[3] <http://staging.ncdalliance.org/resources/signalling-virtue-promoting-harm>

[4] <http://staging.ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/new-report-details-hundreds-of-examples-of-unhealthy-commodity-industries-leveraging-the-covid-19-pandemic>