



# “Big Food” and Children’s Health

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- on behalf of the I.Family consortium -



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Building on

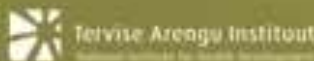




Why don't we see cabbages advertised?

# VALI ROHELISED!

ВЫБИРАЙ ЗЕЛЁНЫЕ!



“Go green!” – Estonian public health campaign  
(<http://www.toitumine.ee/kampaania/viisvilja/tai-plakatid.pdf>)



## Corporations

- Basis of modern capitalism and globalisation
  - Usual assumption: they belong to “free markets”
  - **But** they depend on legal charters
    - Large organisations
    - Control *their own* assets
    - Over long-term
- **Capital-intensive production**



## “Big food”

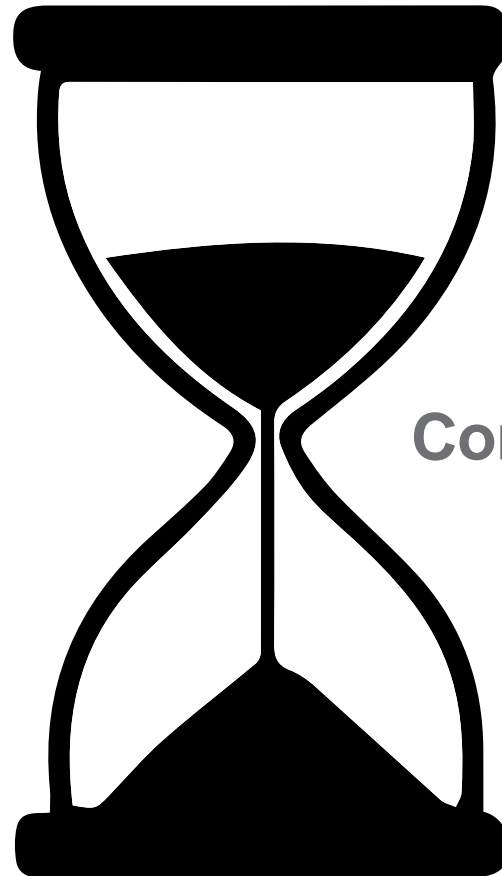
- Capital-intensive production applied to food and drink
  - Factories, research, distribution networks, supply chains, trademarks...
- Dominant role in food and drink markets
  - Largest manufacturing sector in EU
- Results:
  - Acute price pressures on farmers
  - Food processing
  - Marketing of processed foods / drinks



## The hourglass of corporate food systems

**Inputs:** corn, wheat,  
oils, sugars, factory  
farmed meat/dairy

**Outputs:** processed  
foods & drinks



**Farmers** (c. 10 million)

**Corporations**

5 manufacturers  
> 50% food/drink sales

5 supermarkets  
> 60% of market

**Consumers** (c. 500 million)



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- Supply often seasonal/unreliable
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## Processed foods

- Packaging permits branding
- Trademarks = artificial monopolies  
→ ***Relentless marketing***
- Based on a few commodities from industrial agriculture
- Processed for long shelf-life  
= low water/fibre/micro-nutrients
- Processed for sensory appeal  
= high in salt, sugar, fat  
→ ***Calorie dense***

A horizontal line of 20 small, colorful circles in shades of orange, green, blue, and grey, positioned above the section header.

## Self-regulation

- Often promoted – e.g. EU Platform for action on diet, physical activity and health
- Can work where corporate interests align with consumers'
- But:
  - These foods not in consumers' health interests
  - Price / market share pressures acute in food sector
  - Hard for consumers to avoid these foods
  - Children especially vulnerable





“No advertising for food and beverage products to children under the age of twelve on TV, print and internet, except for products which fulfil specific nutritional criteria based on accepted scientific evidence and/or applicable national and international dietary guidelines.”

<http://www.eu-pledge.eu/>



## **Foods and drinks marketed to children by companies that have signed the EU Pledge**

**Foodwatch. 2015. Kindermarketing für Lebensmittel**

<https://www.foodwatch.org/de/informieren/kinderernaehrung/mehr-zum-thema/produkttest-selbstverpflichtung/>



## Big food as powerful

- Shape and reshape food / drink markets
- New infrastructures, technologies, products
- Marketing reshapes consumer preferences
- Power over suppliers
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## ...and powerless

- Can't stop marketing to children
- Can't stop pushing processed foods
- Can't impose meaningful self-regulation
- Can't talk constructively about regulation
- Mounting loss of credibility



## Regulation in the cause of freedom

- Corporations depend on state charters
- Corporate markets promote unhealthy foods
- Corporations have no choice in this

- Regulation is **not** state interference in free markets
- Instead, **enables** market actors to respect public health





## Summary

- Corporations are **not** ‘free market’ actors
- Their strength is capital-intensive production
- Applied to food, this means:
  - Hourglass shape of food supply chain
  - Processed foods, less healthy than whole foods
- If we care about children’s health, we must regulate corporate activities more tightly
- Regulation is not just about restrictions – it can enable respect for children’s health



Thank you