

World Heart Federation Principles for Working with the Food and Beverage Industry

“We need to find ways of working with the Food Industry as they need to be a part of the solution. The best approach is to find where there is mutual interest and work together on the things that you can both agree to work together on and don’t work with them on other issues where there is not mutual interest. Be transparent and recognise that you have different approaches and different interests.” Sir George Alleyne.

The context for working with the food and beverage industry has evolved with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals to guide development over the next 15 years. In addition to specific language regarding access to healthy food and food production, the final target in the document is “Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.”

When considering a relationship with the Food and Beverage industry, these general principles would apply:

- The opportunities that are likely to eventuate from the relationship should be kept at the forefront of thinking. Opportunities may be financial, profile raising and/or contributing to specific strategic goals.
- The aims/products/services/events of the company (and/or its parent company and/or a subsidiary of the company) should not be incompatible with the mission of the WHF.
- Relationships are to be consistent with the strategic objectives of the WHF.
- Relationships shall not bring the WHF name, reputation or credibility into question or disrepute.
- There should be meaningful aims and objectives for the relationship.
- There should be transparency in relationships that are undertaken, and the financial contributions received from companies should be published and their purpose specified.
- Relationships that are consistent with a specific strategic objective should not constrain the World Heart Federation’s ability to meet other strategic objectives.
- Relationships shall, where possible, aim to improve inequities in health.
- Evaluation of the value of the association to the World Heart Federation needs to be built into the relationships, including periodic assessment/audit.
- The benefits and risks of potential relationships shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

We agreed on a two-pronged approach on working with the Food and Beverage industry:

1. A hybrid business relationship/public health approach, involving certification* and industry sponsorship. These would normally be non-exclusive relationships.
2. A public health approach (i.e. environmental), involving a working relationship with the food industry to drive food reformulation** at a global/national level. These initiatives would not involve direct industry sponsorship but may involve the financial support of forums, workshops, professional displays etc.

* Any “certification” approach would involve the establishment of a system to define a required standard set of criteria for the inclusion of a naturally occurring or added substance or ingredient in the food or beverage (e.g. the addition of plant sterols to margarine). This would be a transparent process and would be supported by scientific papers which demonstrated the value of these ingredients to heart health.

** The reformulation approach is more straightforward as it does not follow a business model. The CEO of the WHF will require the flexibility in any policy, to determine the involvement of the WHF in a reformulation initiative on a case by case basis, using the general principles listed above.

There may be relationships that will hold more compatibility with certain strategic objectives (e.g. income generation) than other objectives of the business. There needs to be robust internal discussion in these situations, but a guiding principle is that there needs to be some compatibility with F/B across the business, recognising that consistency/compatibility/opportunity can be subjective terms.