

Survey Finds Coca-Cola, Pepsi Widely Sold in Primary Schools Outside the U.S.

Coke, Pepsi Bottlers Urged to Remove Soft Drinks from Schools World-wide

A recent report prepared for the World Heart Federation surveying school beverage policies in 36 countries found that Coca-Cola and Pepsi are widely sold in primary schools (Kindergarten- 8th grade), a practice that the companies abandoned in the United States and much of Europe. Carbonated and non-carbonated soft drinks are the only foods specifically shown to promote obesity. Obesity, a global problem, contributes to diet-related diseases including type 2 diabetes (formerly called “adult onset” diabetes), which studies show is now occurring in children world-wide.

Under a 2006 agreement, the Coca-Cola Company, PepsiCo and other soft drink companies agreed to only sell water, low-fat milk, and 100% juice to U.S. primary schools. That policy, however, is limited to the U.S. and several other countries that have bans in place. In other portions of the world, Coca-Cola and Pepsi are distributed widely to primary school children:

- In Mexico, soft drinks are sold before, during and after school in small stores in both primary and secondary schools; students can also purchase drinks in vending machines.
- In Hong Kong, primary schools offer soft drinks in vending machines and small shops.
- Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean (in countries like Chile, Venezuela, Peru and Jamaica), soft drinks are available in primary schools through shops, cafeterias and vending machines.
- In India, primary schools sell soft drinks along side their “mid-day meal” during the school day.
- In Saudi Arabia, carbonated soft drink consumption increased in primary schools by 2.8% from 2004 to 2005; and in Argentina, by 1.7%.

Childhood obesity rates in Mexico rival that of the U.S.; approximately 17-20% of children are overweight or obese, according to the International Organization for the Study of Obesity. Latin American and Caribbean countries, China and India have also

witnessed recent growth in childhood obesity rates and a rising incidence of type II diabetes in children.

“It’s shameful that Coke and Pepsi continue to market carbonated soft drinks to school kids in other countries, while ending such practices in the U.S.,” stated Bruce Silverglade, Legal Director at the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

“Childhood obesity is a global problem, and the soft drink giants claim to have global policies to protect children’s health. The companies have pledged not to sell soft drinks in U.S. primary schools and should be following the same practice in the rest of the world.”

“We are calling on parents, teachers, school officials, lawmakers, and health professionals world-wide to contact local bottlers for Coca-Cola and Pepsi to urge them to stop selling soft drinks and other unhealthful beverages in schools. It’s time to ‘think global and act local’ by pressuring bottlers to adhere to best practice standards around the world,” he said.

To send a letter to your local Coca-Cola and PepsiCo bottler urging them to remove soft drinks and other unhealthful beverages from schools, please visit www.dumpsoftdrinks.org and click on the “Think Global, Act Local” link.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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