

## **An open letter<sup>1\*</sup> to chef Jamie Oliver**

Brazil – August 2016

As citizens and civil society organizations committed to health and the human right to adequate food, we are writing this open letter to express our repudiation of the partnership between you and Sadia for the project “Saber Alimenta.” This program provides for so-called “educational activities” in schools, while we know that children should be protected against abusive practices of marketing communication such as merchandising actions within the school environment. Proper and healthy food is a human right recognized in numerous international and national documents, and included in the Brazilian Constitution. We do not want our children to be transformed into promoters of products of any brand. We hope that in view of our considerations set forth in this letter, you will take the necessary measures to prevent the exposure of children to Sadia products and programs, and reconsider your decision to associate your image with this partnership.

### **The human right to Adequate and Healthy Food**

The human right to Adequate and Healthy Food (AHF) consists of two interrelated dimensions: being free from hunger, and having access to adequate food. However, food has been turned into a product; and therefore this basic human right is constantly being threatened, even for those who have no financial restrictions on what food they are able to buy. Ensuring that people have Adequate and Healthy Food does not only involve the characteristics of food products (nutritional balance,

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<sup>1\*</sup> *This letter was prompted by the announcement of the partnership between Frigorífico BRF (owner of the Sadia, Perdigão, Qualy brands) and Jamie Oliver, international chef known for his “Food Revolution” movement focusing on: food education, nutrition, food waste, sustainability, cooking, and ethical trade (which includes the welfare of animals raised for human consumption). This partnership has gained notoriety and generated controversy due to: the amount of financial investment involved, the association between various parties having apparently conflicting practices, the massive and coordinated advertising effort behind it, and the audience being targeted (which includes schoolchildren).*

lower presence of pesticides, etc.) – it also involves making sure that people always have access, in a socially fair way, to proper eating practices which meet their biological and social needs, in accordance with their stage in life and their special dietary requirements. Ensuring that people have access to Adequate and Healthy Food should also take into account local food traditions, and should satisfy principles of variety, balance, moderation, and pleasure (flavor), while also respecting dimensions involving gender and ethnicity, and using environmentally sustainable production methods.

As we know, the world food market is dominated by a handful of transnational corporations which control almost all stages of the food system. Globally this has generated exclusion, poverty, hunger, obesity, and environmental and social damage bordering on catastrophe. To develop effective actions to promote Adequate and Healthy Food, it is essential to have a clear awareness of how this scenario came about.

Countries have the obligation to protect, promote and guarantee the human right to Adequate and Healthy Food (AHF). Brazilian law prohibits advertising which would take advantage of children's lack of judgment and experience (Article 37 § 2 of Brazil's Consumer Protection Code). Brazil's National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CONANDA) defines as abusive any "practice of targeting advertising and marketing communications at children with the intention to persuade them to consume any product or service" (Resolution 163 of 2014). According to this resolution, "marketing communications" are any commercial communication activities, including merchandising and actions through concerts and performances, as well as communications performed under the guise of so-called "educational" activities. Brazilian civil society has been working through various organizations and groups to ensure that children's rights to Adequate and Healthy Food are protected and promoted. One of the key areas for this is the school environment.

## **Food within the school environment**

School is a privileged space for developing values and habits and promoting citizenship and health. Brazil has one of the largest, oldest and most ambitious public school meals programs in the world, whose principles and guidelines are aligned with guaranteeing the human right to Adequate and Healthy Food (AHF). There is of course still room for improvement – but the progress that's been made in recent years in Brazil's National School Meals Program (PNAE) is undeniable. For example, since 2009 there has been a law in effect which requires that at least 30% of federal school-meals funding allocated to municipalities must be used for purchasing food directly from family farmers. This measure has generated a virtuous circle for the local economy, improving the nutritional quality of the meals being served while also supporting local food heritage.

Another key element of Brazil's National School Meals Program are Food and Nutrition Education (EAN) actions, which are intended to be developed directly by education professionals in partnership with local technical program staff – who are able to work with professionals specializing in health and other areas (environment, social welfare etc.). Although many challenges remain involving qualifying and coordinating these activities with the school curriculum, these efforts have achieved major progress in the school environment.

## **Ethical and social issues**

A key issue of this agenda is guaranteeing that Food and Nutrition Education actions are absolutely protected from conflicts of interest (COI). Conflicts of interest occur, for example, when partnerships are established with companies whose products and principles are divergent from or, in general, opposed to the principles and guidelines shaping public policies for promoting and guaranteeing Adequate and Healthy Food. Such partnerships clearly constitute conflicts of interest, because they involve a clash between the interests of the public (promoting Adequate and Healthy Food as described earlier in this document) versus the interests of private corporations (increasing brand awareness, building / consolidating a positive company image, introducing new products from their

portfolio, and building customer loyalty as early as possible – for the purpose of ultimately increasing their sales and profits).

We recognize that conflicts of interest and abusive practices occur when attempting to implement Food and Nutrition Education programs in schools by (or in partnership with) food industries and other companies whose practices could impact public health.

We were surprised to hear that you – a professional claiming to be a social activist – would be willing to act in social spaces involving schools in a country where you're not from, without first establishing any dialogue with local activists and social movements, and without knowing whether your proposal would actually make any sense within this context. In Brazil, there are already many movements, organizations and groups which have been working for many years to promote the agenda of Adequate and Healthy Food, and they were surprised by the announcement of your partnership with Sadia, which they understand would be damaging to the work they've been building on for many decades. What might be a good solution for your country could actually turn out to be inappropriate and even harmful for other countries where the situation is different. Unlike your country, where more than 60% of the calories consumed by the population come from ultra-processed products, in Brazil the figure is 30%, and the main actions promoting Adequate and Healthy Food involve supporting food culture – not promoting ultra-processed products as being supposedly “healthier,” which is what this proposed campaign between you and Sadia would do.

Moreover, it should be noted that the integrated chicken production system adopted by Sadia has been the target of criticism not only because of its adverse effects on animal welfare, but also because this sort of system puts producers into a situation of extreme social vulnerability – which is one of the major challenges to be faced when promoting a healthy and sustainable food system.

## **Social marketing and merchandising**

We find it deeply inconsistent for a professional such as yourself – with your career highlighting important issues such as local food practices, the environment, and ethical trade – to associate your name and your activities with a company like Sadia, which: sells “convenience” products like ready-made meals, cold-cuts and chemically processed meat products such as sausages and tinned hams; promotes a product line on their website called “school foods” (which includes processed and ground meat products such as hot dogs, turkey sausages, and breaded poultry and chicken); and, due to its very nature, attempts to expand the sales and consumption of its ultra-processed food products. The Food Guide for the Brazilian Population,<sup>2\*\*</sup> published in 2014 by Brazil’s Ministry of Health and considered by experts from various countries to be the most ambitious document of its kind worldwide, explicitly recommends avoiding consumption of these sorts of food products. Not only that, but the promotional materials for your campaign with Sadia – which are one of the main pillars of this partnership – claim that your product “is customized in accordance with the guidelines of the Food Guide for the Brazilian Population,” which is far from the truth. Broadcasting that kind of message in the media is a disservice to the appropriate dissemination of the messages from Brazil’s Food Guide – and suggests dubious practices and intentions.

This partnership with Sadia provides for so-called “educational activities” in Brazilian schools through the project “Saber Alimenta,” presented as a “pedagogical project teaching children how to take charge of changing eating habits in the home while creating a closer relationship between children and healthy foods.” In fact, this proposed campaign is a marketing communication practice (merchandising the Sadia brand, targeting children in schools), dressed up as an “educational activity” – and is therefore abusive under the definitions of Brazil’s National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CONANDA).

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<sup>2 \*\*</sup> [http://dab.saude.gov.br/portaldab/biblioteca.php?conteudo=publicacoes/guia\\_alimentar2014](http://dab.saude.gov.br/portaldab/biblioteca.php?conteudo=publicacoes/guia_alimentar2014)

According to Sadia's website, Sadia's project "Saber Alimenta" will reach hundreds of schools in the states of São Paulo and Santa Catarina, targeting students from 1st to 5th grade of elementary school – i.e., children between 6 and 10 years of age! This is an extremely vulnerable audience, whose lack of judgment and experience, due to their age, makes it impossible for them to recognize the ultimate goals behind this marketing campaign: which are actually about persuasion and consumer loyalty. This project may therefore be characterized as a "branding" action whose ultimate goal is to positively develop the reputation of their brand and products, and thus create loyalty among consumers starting from childhood.

Two examples can be given which illustrate the abusiveness and underhandedness of this campaign: (a) the first letter of the "Saber Alimenta" project uses the same typeface as the Sadia logo itself, and (b) the recipes and other materials from the campaign encourage the consumption of Sadia's ultra-processed food products by presenting them as "deliciously healthy" – which, as already pointed out, does not meet the recommendations in the Food Guide for the Brazilian Population.

As mothers, fathers, citizens, educators, health professionals, researchers, and advocates supporting consumer rights, health, and the right to Adequate and Healthy Food, i.e. real food – and supporting the development of sustainable, fair and healthy food systems – we are convinced that entering partnerships with companies which adopt marketing activities targeting young children does not contribute anything to promoting Adequate and Healthy Food; on the contrary, these kinds of campaigns can compromise Food and Nutrition Education (EAN) activities which actually *do* promote positive structural changes. We don't want children being transformed into promoters of any brand. This is not what we understand as self-determination and autonomy – two essential principles of the Food and Nutrition Education strategies developed in our country.

Thus, for the above reasons, we hope that you, Jamie Oliver, will use your media charisma and strength to promote our children's health – instead of strengthening

the marketing of companies who put their commercial interests ahead of the interests of the public.

We are available to clarify and go into further depth regarding any of the various points presented in this communication.

Signatories:

- AAO – Associação de Agricultura Orgânica [Association for Organic Agriculture]
- ACAN – Associação Catarinense de Nutrição [Nutrition Association Santa Catarina]
- ACT Promoção da Saúde [ACT Health Promotion]
- AGAN – Associação Gaúcha de Nutrição [Nutrition Association Rio Grande do Sul]
- ANEES – Associação de Nutrição do Estado do Espírito Santo [Nutrition Association Espírito Santo]
- ASBRAN - Associação Brasileira de Nutrição [Brazilian Nutrition Association]
- ASMAN – Associação Sul-Mato-Grossense de Nutrição [Nutrition Association Mato Grosso do Sul]
- Associação Alagoana de Nutrição – ALNUT [Nutrition Association Alagoas]
- Associação de Nutrição do DF – ANDF [Nutrition Association Federal District]
- Associação de Nutrição do Estado do Rio de Janeiro – ANERJ [Nutrition Association Rio de Janeiro]
- Associação Paulista de Nutrição – APAN [Nutrition Association São Paulo]
- Associação Pernambucana de Nutrição – APN [Nutrition Association Pernambuco]

- Associação Slow Food do Brasil [Slow Food Brazil]
- Centro Ecológico Rio Grande do Sul [Ecological Center Rio Grande do Sul]
- CERESAN – Centro de Referência em Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional [Reference Center for Food and Nutrition Security]
- Conselho da Cultura Alimentar de Curitiba [Council for food culture of Curitiba]
- Conselho de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional de Caxias do Sul [Council for food and nutritional security Caxias do Sul]
- Conselho Estadual de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional de Sergipe – Consean/SE [State Council for food and nutritional security Sergipe]
- Departamento de Nutrição da Universidade Federal de Sergipe – DNUT/UFS [Nutrition department University of Sergipe]
- FASE – Federação dos Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional – [Federation of Entities for Social and Educational Assistance]
- FBSSAN – Fórum Brasileiro de Soberania e Segurança Alimentar [Brazilian forum for food sovereignty and security]
- IBFAN Brasil - Rede Internacional em Defesa do Direito de Amamentar [International Baby-Food Action Network Brazil]
- IDEC – Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor [Brazilian Consumer Protection Institute]
- Instituto Kairós [Kairós Institute]
- MSP Brasil – Movimento pela Saúde dos Povos Brasil [Brazilian People's Health Movement]
- Núcleo de Alimentação e Nutrição em Políticas Públicas da UERJ - Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro [Department for food, nutrition and public policies, Rio de Janeiro University]



- NUPENS - Núcleo de Pesquisas Epidemiológicas em Nutrição e Saúde da Universidade de São Paulo [Department of Nutrition, School of Public Health, University of São Paulo]
- NUPPRE-UFSC Núcleo de Pesquisa de Nutrição em Produção de Refeições da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina [Department of Nutrition in meals production, University of Santa Catarina]
- Observatório de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional do Estado de Sergipe (OSANES) [Observatory of food and nutritional security from Sergipe]
- OPSAN – Observatório de Políticas de Segurança Alimentar e Nutrição [Observatory for Food Security and Nutrition Policies] – Universidade de Brasília [University of Brasilia]
- Projeto interinstitucional “Alimentos bons, limpos e justos: ampliação e qualificação da participação da Agricultura Familiar brasileira no movimento Slow Food” [Interinstitutional Project “Good food, clean and fair: expansion of Family farming in the Slow Food movement]
- PROSAN - Promoção da Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional no Contexto da Alimentação Escolar da Universidade Federal de Viçosa [Promotion of food and nutritional security in school meal programs, University of Viçosa]
- Rede Brasileira de Professores de Universidades Públicas [Brazilian coalition of public universities professor]
- REDESSAN Rede de Mulheres Negras para Soberania e Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional [Black women coalition for sovereignty and food and nutritional security]
- SINESP – Sindicato dos Nutricionistas do Estado de São Paulo [Nutritionists Union from São Paulo]
- SINUSC – Sindicato dos Nutricionistas no Estado de Santa Catarina [Nutritionists Union from Santa Catarina]
- Slow Food Educação [Slow Food Education]

- WPHNA World Public Health Nutrition Association