

Food industry challenged to do more to help all Indians eat nutritious foods and healthy diets

For immediate release

ATNI analyses industry efforts to provide better nutrition in India before and since the pandemic

New Delhi, 25th February, 2021 – Today the Access to Nutrition Initiative (ATNI) is publishing **in-depth thematic results and analysis on food companies' contributions to better nutrition** as part of the India Spotlight Index 2020. The Index assesses India's 16 largest food and beverage manufacturers' nutrition-related commitments, practices, and disclosure. The key findings published last year revealed that food companies in India show their commitment (on their websites) to provide healthy food, and to support the Poshan Abhiyaan mission and the Eat Right Movement. However, current industry efforts are not sufficient to match the scale of the nutrition challenge that the country faces and companies can and should do more. **ATNI has today published the results and analysis of how the companies deal with nutrition beyond the nutritional quality of products, focusing on the following topics: Governance, Accessibility, Marketing, Employee and Consumer Lifestyles, Labeling and Engagement.** The chapters also include an impression of how companies are dealing with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr. Rajan Sankar, Direction of Nutrition at TATA Trusts and ATNI board member says ***“The in-depth thematic results and analysis published by the Access to Nutrition Initiative today provides practical and actionable recommendations that must be taken on board by India’s largest food and beverage companies. If companies are to fulfill their role of providing accessible and affordable healthy food to all they must take action, particularly in the challenging context of the Covid-19 pandemic, where good nutrition for all is essential as the changing situation advances and new challenges emerge.”***

The detailed findings published on ATNI's interactive website today are the results of research and analysis conducted in 2019-2020. The context has changed significantly after the start of the research with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic as food systems and families struggle to adapt to unprecedented circumstances. The food industry, particularly the companies assessed in the India Index, have a major role to play in the response to the pandemic. ATNI hopes that the findings and recommendations published today can guide companies, encouraging them to improve their nutrition practices and to provide accessible and affordable healthy food to all.

Some of the specific findings and recommendations from the analysis published today:

Governance

It is essential that India's leading food and beverage companies focus more than ever on healthy diets and good nutrition during crisis. They should redouble their efforts to adhere to all relevant product standards, responsible marketing practices and responsible use of health and nutrition claims in line with government/Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) guidance. Full Governance report available [here](#).

Products (previously published 2020)

The number of companies voluntarily fortifying their products with vitamins or minerals essential to combat hidden hunger has increased. Product fortification should be further intensified and efforts to ensure such products reach those who need them increased, as recommended by FSSAI. Less than a third (27%) of the companies' total sales of packaged foods and beverages comes from healthy products. More innovative, healthy and affordable products can and should be introduced to make a real difference. Full Products report available [here](#).

Accessibility and affordability of healthy food

In India, food and nutrition security for the poor deserves special attention, particularly amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Supply chain disruptions can cause food price rises, increasing the overall cost of nutritious foods,

making a healthy and diverse diet less affordable. Companies in India play an important role in ensuring the accessibility and affordability of healthy products; for example, by not increasing the price of healthier products despite the economic shocks of COVID-19. Currently none of the India-based companies have made commitments on their websites to keep prices low. Read more about the Indian food industry's response to the pandemic in ATNI's recently published [Covid-19 report](#). Full Accessibility and Affordability report available [here](#).

Marketing

Screen or online time for many Indian children 5 to 15 years old has doubled since the first lockdown. Changes in livelihoods and lifestyles, including lockdown measures, could significantly worsen childhood overweight and obesity problems. None of the companies currently have a reference on their websites reiterating any commitment to responsible marketing to children during the pandemic. Only 12% of products analysed, using the WHO nutrient profiling model for East Asia, were found to be fit to be marketed to children. ATNI urges companies not to relax existing marketing commitments particularly to children and recommends that they continue to prioritize marketing of healthier products. Full Marketing report available [here](#).

Healthy eating and lifestyles of employees and consumers

Indian food companies prioritized the health and safety of their employees during the COVID-19 crisis. Protecting support to breastfeeding working mothers should be part of that strategy. Job loss prevention of own employees as well as for support to suppliers is another important strategy to safeguard food supply to Indian consumers. Full Lifestyles report available [here](#).

Labeling and claims

As the consumption of packaged foods and beverages in India rises, which is also evident during the pandemic, accurate and interpretive labelling showing nutrition information becomes more important. ATNI encourages companies to (re)commit to better nutrition labelling. Including use of claims in line with Codex or FSSAI guidance and progressive front of pack labels that will help consumers to make healthy choices. Companies should reinforce commitments to base any claims only on scientific evidence, and in alignment with the regulations of the FSSAI. Full labelling and claims report available [here](#).

Engagement

The India Spotlight Index 2020 highlights the critical need for food and beverage companies to assume a central role in the Indian Government's Eat Right Movement. In the ATNI Covid-19 project companies also assessed in this Index were examined in relation to their responses to the pandemic. ATNI found that companies can and did support government actions and efforts to assist the most vulnerable sections of society during the COVID-19 pandemic and improve access to food. Companies also work with international organizations, academic experts and/or NGOs to inform their nutrition-sensitive strategies and interventions. Full Engagement report available [here](#).

The full India Spotlight Index interactive report is available here: <http://bit.ly/37ZYogN>

ATNI encourages companies, NGOs, government, and investors to utilize these findings and continue their engagement with ATNI as we collectively work to contribute to an environment that empowers consumers in India to make informed, healthy choices.

ATNI will soon be organizing an online event to share these findings with stakeholders and also to discuss the findings of the recently published third ATNI Covid-19 report which features an in-depth look at the nutrition situation in India and how the government and food industry has responded to the pandemic. Sign up to our [mailing list](#) to receive an invite.

***The sixteen companies included in the Spotlight Index 2020 were:**

AMUL- Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd, Britannia Industries Limited, CocaCola India, Hindustan Unilever, Mondelez India Foods Private Limited, Mother Dairy Fruit & Vegetable Private Limited, Nestlé India Limited, Parle Products Private Limited, PepsiCo India (these nine companies were also assessed in the 2016 India Index), AAVIN-Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers Federation, Adani Wilmar, Emami Agrotech Ltd, Hatsun Agro Product Limited, ITC Limited, Karnataka Cooperative Milk Producers Federation (Nandini), Marico Limited (these seven companies are assessed for the first time).

About the Access to Nutrition Initiative:

ATNI is an international not-for-profit organization. It publishes independent and comprehensive analysis and commentary on food and beverage companies' efforts to improve consumers' access to nutritious foods and beverages, both globally and in Spotlight countries. Additionally, ATNI collaborates with all relevant stakeholders including the investment community to ensure the Indexes are a useful tool as they engage with and invest in food and beverage companies.

About the Index:

The second edition of the India Spotlight Index evaluates food and beverage manufacturers on their policies, practices, and performance related to improving nutrition. The initiative is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Governments of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The 16 largest companies in India's food and beverage sector are being assessed with the aim to encourage these companies to improve their nutrition practices. The methodology has been adapted with input from Indian experts and a wide variety of stakeholders to reflect recent developments in India.