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Dear Jim

Re: **FAO Statement on Sugar**

Like you, I was quite appalled to see the document on sugar and wondered if it really did have the imprimatur of the FAO. However, the more one looks at it the more one realises that this is a carefully prepared document by a member of FAO staff and carries their stamp. In this context it is an entirely inappropriate use of FAO's time and equally an completely inappropriate part of a nutrition strategy for the world.

My specific comments are as follows.

- a) The document is completely biased and sets out to be entirely defensive of sugar. In no way does it look at the issues and balance the evidence. It does mention dental caries in a somewhat begrudging way but at no time does it really look at the evidence that obesity may be one of the key manifestations of excess sugar intake. If such a link is established then the way through to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, etc is clear.
- b) I was particularly incensed on page 1, para 3, where there was a link made between undernutrition in developing countries and low sugar intakes. This paragraph implies that all these countries need to do is to increase their sugar intake and all will be well! I cannot imagine a less appropriate strategy for third world nutrition than this. The mind boggles at treating undernutrition with sugar.
- c) On page 2 the Rome meeting is clearly taken as the Bible, but of course our text has been highly selectively quoted. The issue which is not addressed here is, of course, that whilst in developed countries high fat intakes and reduced exercise are critical in the development of obesity, in developing countries it is quite evident already that fat is not the key and that sugar may well be of critical importance. My guess is that the evidence will eventually show that sugar is a leading cause of obesity in developing countries!

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Medical Research Council and the University of Cambridge

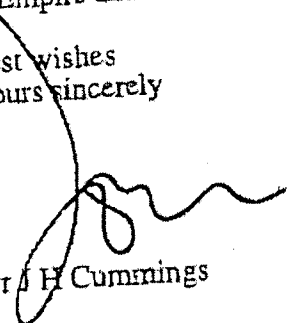
d) On page 3 the glycaemic index argument is brought forward and of course the bare bones cannot be argued with. I would be interested to know how Tom Wolever and Mark Wahlqvist replied to this but what the sugar people perhaps do not take on board is that the glycaemic index in response to white bread etc may be equally inappropriate. Moreover the whole question of fructose and protein glycation needs to be more carefully looked at and in this context I think sugar is a major factor.

e) The final paragraph on page 5 displays Mr William D Clay's hand like none other. This paragraph reads as if the whole intention of FAO policy is to dispel the myths of sugar and bring it into mainstream nutrition as an important food component. There is no suggestion that this might be inappropriate, particularly in third world countries, that there is no dietary requirement for sugar and that surely where there is some doubt about the scientific evidence at this stage we should certainly not be encouraging developing countries to increase their intakes.

If you do reply to FAO you might think about doing it at the highest level. My impression of the officials who attended the Rome meeting was that a number of them were either highly sympathetic or even directly in the pay of sugar related industries.

Finally, I don't really understand the attitude of the developing countries in this context. Many have a huge array of indigenous foods which could be supported, but seem to take a pride in turning themselves into a Coca-Cola and burger consuming society. I guess it is the remnants of Empire and we are at the end of the day to blame!

Best wishes
Yours sincerely



Dr J H Cummings