

The food industry should be regulated: expert

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"The obesity crisis is made worse by the way industry formulates and markets its products and so must be regulated to prevent excesses and to protect the public good," writes a leading food expert in this week's *PLoS Medicine*.

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Kelly Brownell from the Rudd Center for [Food Policy](#) and Obesity at Yale University argues that like all industries, the food industry plays by certain rules: "It must defend its core practices against all threats, produce short-term earnings, and in doing, sell more food. If it distorts science, creates front groups to do its bidding, compromises scientists, professional organizations, and community groups with contributions, blocks needed public health policies in the service of their goals, or engages in other tactics in "the corporate playbook," this is what it takes to protect business as usual."

He argues that left to regulate itself, the food industry has the opportunity, if not the mandate from shareholders, to sell more products irrespective of their impact on consumers so government, foundations, and other powerful institutions should be working for regulation, not collaboration and says: "Respectful dialogue with industry is desirable, and to the extent industry will make voluntary changes that inch us forward, the public good will be served."

However Brownell cautions: "There must be recognition that this will bring small victories only and that to take the [obesity problem](#) seriously will require courage, leaders who will not back down in the face of harsh industry tactics, and regulation with purpose."

More information: Brownell KD (2012) Thinking Forward: The Quicksand of Appeasing the Food Industry. *PLoS Med* 9(7): e1001254.
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