

FD Food
Drink
Ireland

lbec

Responsible marketing

Sector priorities
for future success



Responsible marketing

How we consume media has changed dramatically in recent years, with the emergence of widespread access to digital channels, and consumer marketing has evolved in response. This has led to a renewed focus on responsible marketing from a range of different stakeholders (companies, governments, civil society groups), as they ensure that appropriate practices are in place.

As leading food and beverage companies, Food Drink Ireland (FDI) members have a key role to play in reconnecting people with the food ecosystem through their brands, in a responsible way. FDI member companies are committed to marketing their products responsibly, as part of a balanced diet. Many FDI members operate rigorous internal marketing codes, demonstrating leadership within Ireland, and even globally, when it comes to setting standards for responsible marketing.

These company-specific initiatives sit alongside a comprehensive set of codes and pledges at international, national and sectoral level, including:

- National codes
- Voluntary Codes of Practice (VCoP)
- EU developments on responsible marketing

The Healthy Ireland team in the Department of Health has indicated that marketing practices will be a particular focus of its work from 2020, with an emphasis on marketing to children and digital marketing. FDI is committed to working with government and other stakeholders to ensure widespread adherence to existing rules and codes, timely identification of any gaps that need to be addressed and profiling of the Irish approach among EU member states. Obesity is a complex, multi-faceted challenge and all stakeholders will need to work in partnership to create lasting change.



National codes

BAI Children's Commercial Communications Code

A significant Code in terms of the marketing and promotion of food products for FDI members is the Children's Commercial Communications Code, governed by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland¹ (BAI). The Code contains specific rules and responsibilities for companies marketing products calculated as high in fat, especially saturated fat, sugar and salt (HFSS foods). In 2018, there were just four complaints submitted, a signal of the high level of compliance.

This Code is currently undergoing a statutory review in order to ensure it remains robust and reflects modern marketing practices. FDI participated in a stakeholder workshop as part of this review and is committed to continued engagement with the BAI. If this review leads to a proposal for changes, FDI members will share with the BAI their assessment of any impact the proposed changes will have, as well as engaging on the implementation period of the new Code.

ASAI Code

The Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI) is an independent self-regulatory body. The existing ASAI code has been in place for over 30 years and is now in its seventh edition, ensuring that it keeps pace with best practice. The ASAI Code contains a specific section for food and non-alcoholic beverages.

The ASAI conducts a rigorous and transparent monitoring process and provides a fair system for dealing with legitimate complaints. In 2019, 137 complaints were made about advertisements in the food and beverage sector but only seven were found to have been in breach of the Code. This clearly demonstrates that the vast majority of advertisers are compliant with the Code and demonstrates widespread commitment to effective co-regulation.

1. Broadcast Authority of Ireland (2013): BAI Children's Commercial Communications Code



Voluntary Codes of Practice (VCoP)

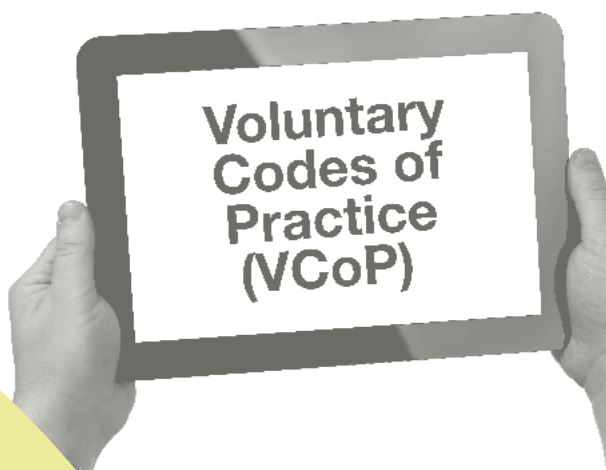
In the Government's Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016-2025², action 3.2 is to develop, implement and evaluate a code of practice for food and beverages promotion, marketing and sponsorship. State agencies, the food industry and advertising organisations are cited as key partners in achieving this.

This action led to the establishment of a collaborative working group, including a range of government departments and agencies alongside industry stakeholders, with an independent chairperson. FDI was closely involved in this process, which led to the successful development of the Voluntary Codes of Practice (VCoP) for Non-Broadcast Media Advertising and Marketing of Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages, including Sponsorship and Retail Product Placement³.

The purpose of these codes is to ensure HFSS foods are marketed and advertised in a responsible way, in particular via digital and other non-broadcast media. FDI and its member companies remain committed to the VCoP and call on the Department of Health to progress the requirements in section 10.1.4 and 10.1.5 of the VCoP, which state:

- 10.1.4: These Codes will be monitored for compliance and effectiveness by a monitoring body designated by the Minister for Health.
- 10.1.5: These Codes will be underpinned by guidance developed by the monitoring body with respect to its application.

Without these elements, the VCoP cannot be fully implemented. They are crucial to ensure the work that has been done on the VCoP to date can be brought to completion and will provide ongoing clarity to food and drink companies about any changes they may need to make to their own marketing practices.



2. Department of Health (2016): A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan, Ireland
3. Department of Health (2017): Non-Broadcast Media Advertising and Marketing of Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages, including Sponsorship and Retail Product Placement: Voluntary Codes of Practice

EU developments on responsible marketing

EU Pledge

Many of the leading food brands selling into the Irish market are engaged with initiatives at a European level including the EU Pledge. The EU Pledge was launched in 2007 and a number of FDI members were involved in the founding of this voluntary initiative. Today, EU Pledge member companies account for over 80% of food and beverage advertising spend in the EU.

The EU Pledge outlines strict guidelines for the advertising of food and beverage products, with two main commitments:

- No advertising for food and beverage products to children under the age of twelve on TV, print and internet, except for products which fulfil common nutritional criteria.
- No communication related to products in primary schools, except where specifically requested by, or agreed with, the school administration for educational purposes.

Detailed implementation guidance is provided to EU Pledge members. In line with the Terms of Reference of the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, monitoring of and reporting on implementation is required. Independent, third-party compliance monitoring is conducted every year in a representative sample of EU member states.

EU Joint Action Best-ReMaP

A key developing project at a European level on the marketing and promotion of food products is the Best-ReMaP Joint Action, with 21 member states participating. One of the key focuses of this project is the marketing of foods and beverages high in fat, salt and sugar to children and adolescents. Ireland is playing an important role on this particular aspect as a lead on the marketing stream of this project.

FDI members are committed to engaging with and supporting Ireland's participation in the development of this initiative where appropriate. FDI would urge the government to use this opportunity to profile the successful collaboration between government and industry stakeholders on projects such as the VCoP.

Conclusion

The food and drink industry has a key role to play in continuing to champion responsible marketing and advertising.

As outlined, FDI members are actively engaging in a number of initiatives at both national and international level which highlight the industry's commitment to contributing to improving public health and nutrition as the focus on this issue continues to grow at national level.

Obesity is a complex, multi-faceted challenge and all stakeholders will need to work in partnership to create lasting change. FDI is calling on the Department of Health to ensure that projects such as the VCoP are progressed and implemented quickly in order contribute to public health.



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FDI is the main trade association for the food and drink industry in Ireland. It represents the interests of over 150 food, drink and non-food grocery manufacturers and suppliers.

FDI provides leadership and direction on a number of key strategic issues, including the economic importance and reputation of the sector, competitiveness, innovation, trade, skills, regulation and general food chain policy.