[IE] Revision of General and Children's Commercial Communications Codes

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On 12 October 2012 the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) announced the outcome of consultations on the revision of the General and Children's Commercial Communications Codes (see IRIS 2011-7/29). The revised Codes will deal, in particular, with the approach to be taken to products that are high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS).

The BAI is required under section 42 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 to develop advertising codes to protect the general public health interests of children and may prohibit the advertising in a broadcasting service of a particular class or classes of foods. Prior to the first stage of a two-stage consultation process begun in September 2011, the BAI convened an Expert Working Group to examine health concerns for children in Ireland and to determine if the promotion to children of HFSS foods and drinks should be restricted (see IRIS 2011-7/29).

The Expert Group Report recommended the Nutrient Profiling Model, developed by the UK Food Standards Agency specifically for broadcast regulation (see IRIS 2007-1/20), as the mechanism for defining HFSS food and drink. The first stage of the consultation sought the public's views on the Expert Group Report. Informed by this consultation the BAI accepted the Nutrient Profiling Model to define HFSS food and drink and prepared Draft General and Children's Commercial Communications Codes that contained specific rules to restrict the promotion of less healthy HFSS food and drink. As required by section 44 of the Broadcasting Act 2009, the Draft Codes were then issued for consultation.

This second stage of the consultation process sought further views on the Nutrient Profiling Model and the specific rules and restrictions contained in the Draft Codes. Resulting from this stage of the consultation process, cheese, which was initially included, has been exempted from the nutrient profiling model. This change was made on the recommendation of the Department of Health due to the health benefits of cheese and the economic and cultural significance of cheese in the Irish context. Advertisements for cheese will, however, include an on-screen message indicating the recommended daily consumption limits.

Following the second consultation the specific rules proposed in the Draft Children's Commercial Communications Code have been finalised by the BAI. This

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means that commercial communications for HFSS food and drink shall not:

- be permitted in children's programmes as defined by the code;

- include celebrities or sports stars;

- include children's programme characters;

- include licensed characters, for example characters and personalities from cinema releases;

- contain health or nutrition claims; or

- include promotional offers.

The BAI also finalised the General Commercial Code rules, which will limit HFSS advertising so that no more than 25 percent of advertising sold by a broadcaster can be for HFSS food and drink. Also, only one in four advertisements for HFSS products will be permitted in any advertising break. The revised Codes will be formally launched in January 2013 and following a lead-in period will come in to effect from 1 July 2013.

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, BAI Signals new rules to govern advertising of food and drink in children's advertising, 12 October 2012

http://www.bai.ie/?p=2792

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, Draft BAI General and Children's Commercial Communications Codes Consultation Document, March 2012

http://www.bai.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/201203_ConsultDoc_English_vFinal.pdf

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