



INSTITUTE
for
AGRICULTURE
and
TRADE POLICY

PRESS RELEASE April 18, 2006
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press contact
Ben Lilliston
(612) 870-3416 or blilliston@iatp.org

U.S. Farm Policy Contributes to Obesity, New Report Policies Drive Production of Unhealthy Foods

Minneapolis - U.S. farm policy geared towards driving down prices for corn and soybeans is a significant contributor to the nation's obesity epidemic, according to a report released today by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

The report, *Food Without Thought: How U.S. Farm Policy Contributes to Obesity*, found that low prices for corn and soybeans over the last several decades has spurred investment in high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) and hydrogenated vegetable oils (trans fats). The introduction of HFCS and trans fats directly mirrors alarming increases in obesity rates in the U.S., the report found. The full report can be found at: www.iatp.org.

And while prices for crop ingredients for HFCS and trans fats have decreased, contributing to low-priced, calorie-dense processed foods, prices for fruits and vegetables, grown with relatively little government support, have steadily increased, according to the report. A number of studies have documented the strong correlation between price and consumer food purchases.

"The food industry and consumers are following the distorted market signals driven by our farm policy," said Mark Muller, director of IATP's Environment and Agriculture Program and co-author of the report. "If we want to seriously deal with obesity, let's create markets that promote healthy food production and consumption. Right now, farm policy is doing just the opposite."

The report found that farmers also lose from the current system, which favors the production of low value bulk commodities over higher value food crops. U.S. consumers are increasingly reliant on imports of high value produce crops, which is a lost opportunity for U.S. farmers. Meanwhile, our farmers struggle to remain economically viable producing overly abundant and low value grains and oilseeds.

To make a shift towards a healthier farm policy, the report recommended:

- * An emphasis on the connections between public health, food and farm policy.
- * Support for local and regional food systems that benefit health and farmers.
- * Market incentives to increase healthy food consumption.
- * School and government procurement policies that favor healthy food.
- * A common farmer-public health platform for the upcoming farm bill.

"There is a great opportunity in the next farm bill to build in a set of new priorities that benefit public health by rewarding farmers for growing healthy foods," said IATP's Heather Schoonover, co-author of the report. "Such a shift would not only benefit public health, but also our farmers."

The full report can be found at: www.iatp.org

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works globally to promote resilient family farms, communities and ecosystems through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy.