

# LIMUN

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## World Health Organization

### *Topic A: "The Fast Food Epidemic"*

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## I. COMMITTEE BACKGROUND

The World Health Organization, also known as WHO, directs and coordinates global health issues within the United Nations system, whose primary role is to shape the health research agenda, set health-related norms and standards, articulate evidence-based policy options, provide resources and technical support to countries, and monitor global health trends. It was founded in 1948 and its headquarters are currently situated in Geneva, Switzerland. Additionally, their investigation and performance are heavily influenced by scientific data and reliable documents.

## II. HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

### A. Introduction to the topic

Eating out for entertainment purposes did not commence until the 18th century in Western society. As time was ticking and millions of restaurants emerged, the idea was slowly reaching levels of dullness, up until fast food abruptly transformed the restaurant industry forever. The fast-food

chain marks its inception with the founding of White Castle in the year 1921. Their work readjusted the perception citizens had for fast food, thinking it was low quality and served only in public entertainment areas such as circuses, town fairs, etc. Initially, citizens showed resentment towards this completely distinct idea, supposing it would be just a regular, low-quality, hamburger restaurant. However, something they would have never imagined took place, something that awed millions of minds in the states.

White Castle's idea to successfully alter the citizens' insight towards hamburgers, was to promote cleanness with the making of their food; the walls of their restaurant were painted white, a spotless color, and the name of the place generated sentiments of pureness. Still, the difference that stood out the most was their public-eye cuisine, in order for customers to carefully observe the healthy construction of their hamburgers and prove its harmlessness. With this, White Castle aimed to become a trustworthy business for everyone and make hamburgers something that people desire with satisfaction, not disgust.

Soon afterward, specifically 27 years in time, the famously known Macdonald brothers began to work and desperately searched for something that would blow people's minds. Hence, they came up with this innovative idea called the assembly-line system, which became practical and provided effective and rapid services.

As soon as Mcdonald's was launched, other fast-food restaurants followed, such as Burger King, Taco Bell, and Wendy's, who tried to follow Mcdonald's exact system. Not long after, the fast-food chain became a billion-dollar industry with more than a quarter of a million restaurants worldwide. From

being poorly fantasized about, fast food became irresistible for many citizens, being received with open hands, and mouth.

## B. Evolution of the topic

Although it was economically successful and owned an excellent reputation in the market, the fast-food industry was slowly approaching a downfall. In the 1990s, doctors and nutritionists started showing concern; they attacked McDonald's and other fast-food chains for promoting severe, unhealthy choices and undermining local values and culture. What was especially criticized was their marketing campaign, which aggressively promoted their products to children.

In the lapse of just three decades since the first ever fast-food chain, obesity rates reached an alarming level. The problem wasn't the food in itself, but the magnitude of the portion. Millions of customers, particularly those who were financially unstable, were primarily appealed by these large scale servings, noticing the price offer. The larger the portion was, the more affordable it got.

Despite the fact that millions of people were risking their health by consuming fast food, the market kept going. However, to pacify people's concerns and not risk their elevated position in the market, healthier choices started to make an appearance in their menus, such as salads and apple slices. In 2002, Burger King was the first fast-food restaurant to offer a vegetable burger. Scientists started to interfere, and not long after, other authentic vegetarian products were launched.

## C. Relevant events so far

### The Fast Food Industry Gets Sued

In 2004, a man named Morgan Spurlock completely stirred millions of minds worldwide. With his well-known and

Academy Award nominated documentary called "Supersize Me", Spurlock proves the severe consequences of fast food consumption and creates a consensus towards health and well-being. He performs an experiment, which consisted of eating only McDonald's for a month straight. With this, Spurlock aimed to make a comparison of his physical and internal state before and after the experiment. Also, one of the requirements of his experiment was to buy the supersize option whenever it was offered.

The results came out shocking. Spurlock's cholesterol levels struck at an alarming level, increasing the probability of long-term heart issues. His weight also changed tremendously and, because of constant exhaustion, Spurlock was unable to do much physical activity. Before conducting the experiment, doctors showed grave concern for Spurlock's health by desperately convincing him to stop this incredulous idea of his. They knew unpleasant consequences would emerge after this experiment.

As soon as the documentary aired worldwide, McDonald's had no choice but to remove the supersize option from their menu, since many showed evident fear.

### Children: The Main Target Audience

During the 1980s, McDonald's was the first fast food chain to install a playground in each of its locations. This attracted many families, especially children, and motivated them to stay longer and come back more frequently.

After some time, more fast food chains followed McDonald's footsteps. In the end, the majority of fast food installments have a playground, and they would be unintelligent to remove them. Since children seem to be an excellent and a financially beneficial target for the industry,

fast food chains have been working hard to get their hands on the kids. Ever since McDonald's created Ronald McDonald (the clown), approximately 93% of children worldwide recognize who the character is. This proves the grade of impact fast food marketing has had on children. As it is assumed, doctors show grave concern by seeing how it could have a huge effect in the children's life span, but parents seek happiness for their children and would do anything to assure a joyful and fulfilling life to them. Having said this, it is obvious that the main issue here is education.

### The Introduction of Drive Thru

The rise of car usage in the 1950s influenced the creation of drive-ins, taking convenience to another level. The first fast food restaurant to introduce drive thru was Red's Giant Hamburger in Springfield. This had both positive and negative effects in the states.

Considering the simplicity of the action, many began to prefer taking their car and picking out their food rather than having to cook at home and buy all the essentials. This was one of the main causes of the rise of obesity in the world; from only 12% of the population being obese, the number quickly escalated to 23%.

In regard to technology advancement, drive thrus were an incredible impact. This became the cause of the creation of automatic windows in cars and the necessity to improve the vehicle in general. Other than that, with the apparition of the COVID-19 pandemic in the year 2020, drive thrus involve limited contact, assuring the customers' safety. Finally, the making of drive thrus influenced the creation of delivery service. Now, people can receive food without leaving their own homes.

### III. CURRENT ISSUES

#### A. Panorama

As the fast food industry kept progressing a lot faster than anticipated, its impact ended up being global. Some countries were optimistic and open to the idea, for it provided lots of economic benefits and provoked many smiles. On the other hand, others were reluctant to help enhance this new industry, noticing how it has been affecting many lives negatively and how it brought various unsatisfactory thoughts. Finally, a small percentage of delegations were fast to completely block any fast food chain coming their way, after having inferred the amount of consequences it could bring to life.

#### B. Points of view

##### United States of America

The USA is the biggest fast food consumer in the entire world. Having originated the industry, many Americans are trapped in the universe of greasy burgers and crispy fries. The country has the largest obesity rates among adults and has millions of fast food installments, making it easily available whenever a citizen savors something practical to consume. However, the amount of money it has generated in the states is insane, becoming an excellent economic cushion for the government.

In 2016, based on a study conducted by the University of Washington, 500,000 deaths in the USA were aligned with unhealthy eating. Body malfunctions that lead to these deaths were diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc.

Moreover, since World War II, fast food chains have served as a financial opportunity for those that didn't obtain a sufficient education and are in the search for a job.

In brief, the impact fast food has had in the USA alone is incomparable; it filled an entire gap in the market.

### France

France is well known for its divine cafés and restaurants, serving only fine and good-quality food. However, during these past few decades, as the fast food industry was taking its rise worldwide, France was slowly starting to incorporate fast food restaurants around its cities. Taking in consideration its rapidness and convenience, many French citizens started directing their attention towards fast food restaurants.

Even though many cafés, markets, and restaurants are still spread across the country, fast food restaurants are in the process of establishing an invasion. Obesity levels in France have always been relatively low. Even so, many studies and inferences suggest that those rates are slowly spiraling.

### Canada

Canada has been exceedingly affected economically by fast food over these past years. In the year 2021, the industry was worth 31.8 billion dollars and is expected to reach 41.9 billion dollars in 2027. Its top source of income is their famously known fast food restaurant: Tim Horton's.

By having attributed successfully in the compliance of consumer demand for taste and preferences, fast food restaurants in Canada receive plenty of costumers. Just like any average person, citizens in Canada seek rapidness in the making of their food. With the appearance of delivery service

and the continuous run of drive thrus, Canadians are rewarded with the simplicity of receiving their hunger needs in no time.

### Japan

In spite of the fact that Japan is overflowed with various fast food chains, the country is well aware of the consequences of frequent fast food intake. Above all, Japan has been taking careful notice on its inhabitant's weight and waistlines. To manage the situation, Japan imposed stiff penalties to fast food institutions who fail to respect preset targets on weight and waistlines.

Consequently, for having its country well controlled on fast food consumption, Japan today has one of the lowest obesity levels (precisely 3.5% of the population) in the world.

## IV. UN & EXTERNAL ACTIONS

### A. UN

"Within the human rights framework, states are obliged to ensure effective measures to regulate the food industry, ensure that nutrition policymaking spaces are free from private sector influence and implement comprehensive policies that combat malnutrition in all its forms," stated Hilal Elver (2016), a UN special representative on the right to food.

The United Nations has recently shown grave agitation towards the modern food industry; they emphasize the fact that low quality and cheap foods have become the most accessible option, especially for those that live in financially unstable conditions, completely violating the right to an adequate nutrition.

The UN blames the industry for not maintaining good-nutrition targets to their costumers, coming to the



conclusion that those kinds of actions influence abundantly in the rapid increase of obesity levels worldwide. They also insist that marketing campaigns in the industry should have immediate adjustments, considering the unceasing widespread of ads in the media and how they own the power to manipulate their audience in any way they desire.

The World Health Organization asserted the cause of high rates of obesity in specific countries: countries with higher levels of income can afford to install many fast food restaurants. Therefore, those high-income countries show relatively towering levels of obesity. Since the value of the fast food industry is dominant in the market, the WHO suggests for governments to regulate their economy and start promoting better nutrition for their community. They're aware that removing the fast food industry from the market will cause a major disturbance in the world's economy.

## B. External Actions

### The Food and Drug Administration

In 2018, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) implemented a norm in the fast-food industry; any fast food chain was obligated to include the calorie count of each of their products in their menu. With this, costumers started to make more careful choices, regarding food decision-making. For instance, many thought the McDonald's salad was the healthiest choice on the menu. However, its calorie count said otherwise, because the majority of consumers never thought the dressing would spike its calorie count aggressively, considering the huge amount of sugar it contains.

Up until this day, the calorie count is still visible in any fast food restaurant's menu.

## V. CONCLUSION

The WHO should seek ways the fast food industry could still own a position in the market without causing an utmost series of complaints and consequential health causes. Therefore, although there still remains to be a major rise in attacks and concerns regarding the health of many, the fast-food industry continues to run and will for a long time. It has benefited the economy immensely and has lowered unemployment rates like never before. The government is holding tight on this opportunity, and will not risk losing their grip, even if it involves the loss of many lives.

## VI. IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- In what way has society's behavior developed over the course of these past few years, ever since the arrival of fast food chains?
- How are delegations perceiving this drastic change? Are they acting upon it or against it?
- How are families being affected? Are they open to the idea of having to put on less effort by taking their family to these fast food installments?
- Is fast food really the main contributing factor towards the rapid increase of obesity rates worldwide? If so, is there any way to control it?
- What is the main reason people tend to go for unhealthy choices? Do they even think about the consequences?
- If fast food never existed, would there be fewer deaths in the world? How drastic would the number change?

- How would your delegation react if the fast food industry suddenly disappeared? Considering its highly important position in the world's economy?

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