



Globesity: How Globalists Are Feeding Off the Obesity Crisis

Last November, the government of Denmark announced that it was repealing a year-old tax on fatty foods because the tax had failed to curb fat consumption but had succeeded in driving business — and jobs — to neighboring countries. It was a rare retreat in the international war on obesity.

From London to Lima and from the Big Apple to Budapest, governments are imposing increasingly onerous diktats in an effort to shrink their populations' rapidly expanding waistlines. The hope is that by reducing the incidence of obesity, the many health problems associated with it, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes, will also become less common, thereby reducing healthcare costs — a major concern in an era in which governments either heavily subsidize or fully operate their nations' healthcare systems.



Few would deny that obesity is a serious problem in the modern world. Sedentary lifestyles, poor diets, and possibly many other factors have caused scales to tip at previously unheard-of rates. According to the United Nations' World Health Organization (WHO), as of 2008 more than 1.4 billion adults were overweight, and more than half a billion were obese. The WHO claims that every year at least 2.8 million people die as a result of being overweight or obese.

As one might expect, the problem is most acute in prosperous countries. Among industrialized nations, the United States bears the dubious distinction of being the world's fattest, with over 35 percent of adults and 17 percent of youth classified as obese, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. But, says the WHO, "obesity is now also prevalent in low- and middle-income countries." (It is not, however, a noteworthy concern in communist countries, where the population is continually kept on the brink of starvation: North Korea tops the list of thinnest nations.)

The obesity problem, therefore, is not to be ignored; and governments, ever eager to seize upon the latest "crisis" to arrogate more power to themselves, have most certainly not ignored it. While the varied interventions — among them fat taxes, soda bans, and even mandated waist measurements — may appear to be isolated efforts by governments hoping to improve their peoples' health and reduce healthcare costs, they are, in fact, part of a much larger, global movement seeking vastly greater state control over all aspects of society.

The New Global Warming

"Obesity is the new global warming," Wesley J. Smith declared in a 2011 issue of the *Weekly Standard*.



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With the alleged threat of global warming increasingly being viewed with skepticism by the general public, he wrote,

it seems clear that modern liberalism has devised a new strategy for imposing policies that it can't attain through ordinary politicking. First, identify a crisis ostensibly caused by modern lifestyles and/or capitalism. Next, launch a multifaceted international response to prevent allegedly looming catastrophe. Third, act as if the desired policies are objective, scientific solutions. Fund it all by imposing onerous taxes on an expanding list of villainous enterprises, *et voilà*: Liberalism rides to the rescue. And if the strategy fails on one front, as it appears to have with global warming, find another crisis and start again.

The first major salvo in the global war on obesity was launched by the WHO in 2004, when it published its "Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health."

As befits a UN pronouncement, the document's objective was audacious: "The overall goal of the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health is to promote and protect health by guiding the development of an enabling environment for sustainable actions at *individual, community, national and global levels* that, when taken together, will lead to reduced disease and death rates related to unhealthy diet and physical inactivity." (Emphasis added.)

Since free markets and individuals, in the WHO's opinion, are responsible for the human race's rapidly expanding waistlines, they clearly cannot be trusted to solve the problem. "Governments," the Global Strategy maintained, "have a central role ... to create an environment that empowers and encourages behavior changes by individuals, families and communities, to make positive, life-enhancing decisions on healthy diets and patterns of physical activity."

Member states are asked to develop "national strategies on diet and physical activity" that "include specific goals, objectives, and actions." All government agencies, not just those directly responsible for health, should be involved in enforcing these plans.

Plans should take a "life-course approach," i.e., they should cover everyone from cradle to grave. Governments should indoctrinate their people "starting in primary school" and continuing through "adult literacy and education programs."

No contrary messages shall be sent by the private sector, either. "Messages that encourage unhealthy dietary practices or physical inactivity should be discouraged, and positive, healthy messages encouraged." In particular, food and beverage advertisements targeted to children must relay the globalists' mantra, and producers' health claims must be monitored lest they "mislead the public about nutritional benefits or risks."

National governments should also align their food and agricultural policies with the Global Strategy. They should "encourage the reduction of the salt content of processed foods, the use of hydrogenated oils, and the sugar content of beverages and snacks." They should also employ "taxation, subsidies or direct pricing in ways that encourage healthy eating and lifelong physical activity."

Of course, as the WHO recognized, the best-laid plans of bureaucrats and elites will not accomplish their objectives unless someone is seeing to it that the people are obeying. "Monitoring and surveillance are essential tools in the implementation of national strategies for healthy diets and physical activity," and thus "governments should invest in" them. Such "investment," naturally, will require higher taxes; but since the UN has declared that "economic growth is limited unless people are healthy," these programs "should draw policy and financial support from national development plans."



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A Weighty Matter Before the UN

The pressure for an international response to obesity similar to that being pushed for global warming really ratcheted up when the UN General Assembly held a “High-Level Meeting” on noncommunicable diseases, many of which are caused or exacerbated by obesity, in 2011.

In advance of that meeting, the *Lancet*, a British medical journal, published an article calling on the UN to adopt the WHO’s Global Strategy — and making the connection to the global-warming crusade explicit.

“Obesity,” the authors wrote, “should be considered alongside other major issues that confront societies ([including] *action against climate change*), because they all have strong links with obesity prevention, including *common causes and solutions*.” (Emphasis added.)

The study, which was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the National Institutes of Health, argued that the common causes include modern conveniences (including automobiles, which promote inactivity), big business, and an unequal distribution of wealth.

The common solution, naturally, is more government intervention. “Governments are the most important actors in reversing the obesity epidemic.” And they must not be shy about imposing their agenda on every aspect of society: “The changes needed to reverse the epidemic are likely to require many sustained interventions at several levels. Necessary alterations include: individual behavior change; interventions in schools, homes, and workplaces; and sector change within agriculture, food services, education, transportation, and urban planning.”

The authors endorse a variety of “interventions across the life course for all demographic groups.” They call on governments to “protect and promote health and sustainable food security.” They want priority given to “public transport, walking and cycling environments” to get people to stop driving their own cars. They seek wealth redistribution; governments are to “ensure taxation and social policies support the reduction of socioeconomic inequalities that contribute to health inequalities.” They want more funding for government anti-obesity initiatives, paid for via “taxes on tobacco, alcohol, or unhealthy food and beverages.” They call for “national guidelines for individuals” and “national targets for the food industry.” All of this will be overseen by government experts, who will “create monitoring systems to track obesity trends in children and adults” and use “computational modeling” to determine the best approaches to fighting fat.

National goals aren’t the end, however. “The UN and other international agencies need to take action to reduce obesity” — and to spend more money on it. In addition, “the protection and maintenance of public health should be considered in relevant trade, economic, agriculture, environment, food, and health agreements and policies.”

Like its predecessor, the “new global warming” also has its celebrity spokesmen. Just prior to the UN summit, British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver announced that he was circulating a petition to “make obesity a human rights issue,” according to the9billion.com.

“Obesity needs to be on every government agenda,” he said at the One Young World Conference in Switzerland. “It should be as important as the fight against AIDS and climate change. It has to become the national health priority.”

When the General Assembly finally did convene, it — not surprisingly — endorsed the WHO’s Global Strategy. Declaring that “the global burden and threat of non-communicable diseases constitutes one of



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the major challenges for development in the twenty-first century” and “may lead to increasing inequalities between countries and populations,” the world body called for “collective and multisectoral action by all Member States and other relevant stakeholders at local, national, regional, and global levels” to address the problem of obesity.

Solving this problem, the UN said, would “require leadership and multisectoral approaches for health at the government level, including, as appropriate, health in all policies and whole-of-government approaches across” all segments of society. Nothing must escape Big Brother’s notice.

The UN “reaffirm[ed] the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health” and “recognize[d] the importance of universal coverage in national health systems.” It decried the “uneven distribution of wealth” in the world that can contribute to the problem of noncommunicable diseases. And, of course, it called for “increased and sustained human, financial and technical resources” to combat the problem.

Since the UN meeting, the fearmongering has only increased. Scientists (with definite left-wing biases) are now claiming that the increasing prevalence of obesity threatens the entire planet. A 2012 study by faculty members of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine argued that heavier people require more energy to be kept alive and, therefore, “tackling population fatness may be critical to world food security and ecological sustainability.”

“Overpopulation” doomsayer Thomas Malthus and “climate change” both got favorable mentions in the study; and in case anyone still couldn’t recognize the scientists’ political leanings, lead researcher Ian Roberts told the *Daily Mail*: “Everyone accepts that population growth threatens global environmental sustainability — our study shows that population fatness is also a major threat. Unless we tackle both population and fatness, our chances are slim.”

So the same people who have been warning of overpopulation, climate change, and other disasters that will surely befall humanity if its selfish interests are not reined in “for the common good” now want us to believe that unless government steps in and forces us all to lose weight, Earth is surely doomed. I would suggest taking this advice with several grains of salt, but that would undoubtedly run afoul of the globalists’ dietary recommendations.

Of course, as with all such schemes, the elites will be exempt from the rules they impose on the rest of us. Thus, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who has forced restaurants in the city to abandon trans fats and post calorie counts on their menus, worked for reductions in salt in packaged and restaurant food, and got the Board of Health to ban sodas over 16 ounces, “dumps salt on almost everything, even saltine crackers,” “has a weakness for hot dogs, cheeseburgers, and fried chicken, washing them down with a glass of merlot,” and snacks on “Cheez-Its,” the *New York Times* reported. Likewise, while First Lady Michelle Obama lectures the rest of us on eating right, she and her husband are known to indulge in cheeseburgers, French fries, and ice cream. And while the average North Korean makes Calista Flockhart look like Rosie O’Donnell, “Supreme Leader” Kim Jong-un looks like he could use a membership to Weight Watchers.

Subsidizing Super-sized Sodas

For now, though, let us put aside all the principled objections to the global war on obesity and consider one practical objection: The same governments that now wish to impose a reducing program on their citizens are also major contributors to humans’ expanding waistlines. That is especially true in the case of the United States.



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“You are never, ever, ever going to see a change in this country’s obesity until the farm bill is changed,” Dr. Jonny Bowden declared in an interview with *The New American*. “Our government supports, through the farm bill, every fattening crop on the planet, every high-carbohydrate, processed food.”

Bowden, who bills himself as “the Rogue Nutritionist,” is an expert on weight loss, nutrition, and health and has written numerous books on these subjects, including the bestsellers *The 150 Healthiest Foods on Earth* and *Living Low Carb*.

“The major fat-storage hormone in the body is insulin,” Bowden explained, “and the higher your insulin, the more difficult it is to burn fat and lose weight.”

Carbohydrate consumption causes the body to release insulin — the more carbohydrates, the greater the insulin level.

Yet the federal government has for years been subsidizing and promoting the consumption of high-carbohydrate foods. The farm bill subsidizes five commodities: wheat, corn, soybeans, rice, and cotton. The first three of those are the primary ingredients of most processed foods.

Farmers are paid based on how many bushels of these crops they grow, which promotes overproduction. Farmers growing fresh produce, by contrast, receive very little from Washington. “A result of these policy choices is on stark display in your supermarket, where the real price of fruits and vegetables between 1985 and 2000 increased by nearly 40 percent while the real price of soft drinks (a.k.a. liquid corn) declined by 23 percent,” Michael Pollan wrote in a 2007 article in the *New York Times Magazine*. “The reason the least healthful calories in the supermarket are the cheapest is that those are the ones the farm bill encourages farmers to grow.”

One particularly perverse outcome of corn subsidies has been to make high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) the sweetener of choice for processed-food producers. Nearly all non-diet sodas now contain HFCS, and it is also in dozens of other food products, from breakfast cereal to chicken nuggets.

Now, having sugars of any kind tucked into every food imaginable cannot be good for people. But are we even worse off because that sugar is in the form of HFCS?

Both table sugar and HFCS are made up of a combination of glucose and fructose. Sugar is exactly half glucose and half fructose; HFCS, as the name implies, has more fructose — 55 percent to glucose’s 45 percent.

“From a metabolic point of view,” said Bowden, “the damaging part of sugar is fructose.” Since the difference in fructose content between sugar and HFCS is relatively small, he argues that HFCS is “not much worse than sugar.”

Others disagree, citing studies showing that HFCS is metabolized differently from sugar. Still other studies have found no significant difference.

What is certain is that by subsidizing corn, the government has made HFCS considerably less expensive than sugar (which itself is made considerably more expensive by high protective tariffs), thereby enabling processed-food producers to add more sweeteners to their products and sell them in larger sizes without having to raise prices. As a result, Americans today consume vastly more sugar than previous generations, with estimates running as high as 156 pounds per person annually.

The USDA’s Pyramid Scheme

The government’s dietary recommendations also contribute to the obesity problem.



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“The USDA has two mandates, and they are conflicting,” Bowden maintained. “The first is to get the people of the United States good information about nutrition. The second mandate is to build markets and to build business for the agricultural industry. Well, if you’re putting out crap, and you’ve got to build markets for that, you can’t very well tell the people that you’re supposed to be informing that this is crap.”

Political influence has plagued the Department of Agriculture’s dietary advice for well over a century. In his book *Bully Boy: The Truth About Theodore Roosevelt’s Legacy*, Jim Powell notes that Harvey Washington Wiley, the chief chemist at the USDA’s Bureau of Chemistry from 1882 to 1912, “encouraged Americans to consume more sugar, which he considered the hallmark of an advanced civilization. ‘Childhood without candy,’ he remarked, ‘would be Heaven without harps.’” Wiley, as it happens, was tight with the sugar industry. He lobbied for high sugar tariffs, and sugar producers helped protect him from political enemies.

The food pyramid, which the USDA introduced in 1992, was greatly influenced by politics. The pyramid recommended six to 11 servings of grains daily — more than any other food group, and more than vegetables and fruits combined.

“While the government has stood by this regimen for 11 years,” the *Wall Street Journal* reported in 2002, “some critics say it’s no coincidence that the number of overweight Americans has risen 61% since the pyramid was introduced — and almost instantaneously appeared on the sides of pasta boxes, bread wrappers and packages of other food products in the pyramid’s six-to-11-servings category.”

At that time the USDA’s dietary guidelines were up for review, “an exercise that attracts not only critics from the world of medicine but industry lobbyists and those promoting the virtues of various food groups and diets,” the *Journal* observed. The lobbying should not be surprising given that, as the same newspaper reported in 2004, “the tiniest change to the guidelines or pyramid can swing food companies’ sales by millions of dollars.”

“Every aisle of the supermarket has a lobbyist in town,” food-industry consultant Jeff Nedelman told the *Journal*.

Some industry groups, such as the National Dairy Council, sought increases in the number of recommended servings of their products. Others sought merely to retain their prominence in the pyramid: “There is no doubt that the Food Guide Pyramid in 1992 was a big boost to the baking industry,” Sara Lee Corp. baking division spokesman Matt Hall told the paper.

The resulting guidelines were anything but impartial and scientific.

In 2011, the USDA replaced the food pyramid with MyPlate. Most pyramid critics agree that the new guide is an improvement over the old one. Fruits and vegetables now occupy a larger part of the recommended diet, though grains still constitute a sizable portion of it, and dairy — not necessarily harmful but certainly not essential — remains in the recommendations, no doubt reflecting continued industry pressure. And whereas the food pyramid suggested using fats “sparingly,” MyPlate fails to address the issue at all, despite research showing that some fats are actually beneficial.

Now, after all these years of subsidizing and recommending poor diets, the government, led by the UN, wants people to trust it to help them shrink their waistlines. Yet who doubts that, just as in the past, policies implemented in the future will not be governed solely by disinterested scientists but also by lobbyists, politicians beholden to special interests, and researchers pushing an agenda?



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Still, even if disinterested individuals were given a free hand to solve the obesity dilemma, what, exactly, would they do?

“If the president called and said, ‘You’re going to be an advisor [on obesity]. Fix it any way that you want,’ I would just run from the room screaming because I wouldn’t even know where to start,” Bowden said.

While diet and exercise certainly play a role, “there are enormous genetic, metabolic, biochemical, [and] environmental factors that work together in some manner, shape, or form that is virtually impossible to study because you’ve got too many factors,” he averred. “I have talked to obesity researchers who have said, ‘We’ve been studying this stuff for 20 years, and we still do not understand it.’”

This constitutes yet another parallel between “global warming” and the obesity “crisis.” No one doubts that the Earth’s climate has changed over time — not just seasonally but over centuries and millennia — and that even now it is changing in observable ways. Likewise, everyone can see with his own eyes — or bathroom scale — that humans are becoming heavier by the day. In both cases, neither the underlying causes of the changes nor their ultimate repercussions are fully understood, but the solutions proposed by those claiming to know the answers are the same: global governance; a larger, more intrusive state; and a surrender of our liberties.

Putting Government on a Diet

May I suggest a better solution? Get government out of the business of subsidizing crops and making dietary recommendations, period.

If food prices were dictated solely by the market rather than by politics, it is likely that fruits and vegetables would be less expensive than processed, unhealthy foods. As Pollan pointed out:

Compared with a bunch of carrots, a package of Twinkies, to take one iconic processed foodlike substance as an example, is a highly complicated, high-tech piece of manufacture, involving no fewer than 39 ingredients, many themselves elaborately manufactured, as well as the packaging and a hefty marketing budget. So how can the supermarket possibly sell a pair of these synthetic cream-filled pseudocakes for less than a bunch of roots?

In the absence of subsidies for wheat, corn, and soy, it would almost surely be cheaper to yank roots out of the ground and deliver them to the grocery store than to concoct and deliver many processed foods; and if healthful foods were cheaper, people would be more likely to consume them.

In addition, if governments no longer issued dietary guidelines, people would be forced to seek out nutrition information from a variety of sources whose biases are known instead of treating the state’s lobbyist-influenced word on the subject as gospel. This would create more informed consumers who would be less likely to accept claims that, e.g., anything labeled “fat-free” is automatically better for them than an equivalent product containing butter.

One final suggestion: Get the government out of healthcare, too. As long as healthcare costs are socialized, individuals have much less incentive to take care of their own bodies than they would if they had to pay for their own medical treatment. By the same token, when the government is heavily involved in healthcare, it has a strong incentive to take control of individuals’ lives so as to minimize its own costs — one of the main reasons for the push for command-and-control solutions to the obesity problem.



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The last thing the world needs is yet another anti-liberty, wealth-redistributing response to an alleged crisis. Humans are already being crushed beneath the weight of government and UN control. Now is not the time for those institutions to pack on another ton in the name of saving us from ourselves.

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