July 20, 2005

James M. Jenness  
CEO  
Kellogg Company  
1 Kellogg Square  
Battle Creek, MI  49016-1986

Dear Mr. Jenness:

We write to ask the Kellogg Company to discontinue its recent ad campaign for Apple Jacks that disparages fruits and vegetables. In the television ad and on AppleJacks.com, the apple character is named Bad Apple and is described as grouchy and sour and depicted as meddling and scheming. In addition, the television ad states that “Apple Jacks doesn’t taste like apples. Because the sweet taste of cinnamon is the winner mon.” Though Apple Jacks contains very little apples -- less apple or apple juice concentrate than salt – it is inappropriate for Kellogg to disparage the taste of apples. Also, it is more likely that Apple Jacks tastes sweet because it has more sugar than any other ingredient, not because of the added cinnamon.

Most children are not eating recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables. On an average day, 45% of children eat no fruit, and 20% eat less than one serving of vegetables. The average 6 to 11 year old eats less than two cups of fruits and vegetables a day, achieving only half the recommended daily amount for this age group.

Eating fruits and vegetables is important to children’s short-term and long-term health and well being. Most fruits and vegetables are low in calories and nutrient dense, providing key vitamins and minerals. In addition, higher fruit and vegetable intakes can help reduce the illness, disabilities and health-care costs from many chronic diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, cancers, macular degeneration, and cataracts.

Children’s poor eating habits and the rising childhood obesity rates are affected by many factors. However, one of the most important is food marketing. There is no disputing that the goal of food marketing aimed at children is to influence children’s food preferences and choices. In addition, many academic studies demonstrate that food advertising is effective. Marketing should be used to encourage, not discourage, healthy eating behaviors in children.
We ask the Kellogg Company to adopt a strong policy of responsible food marketing to children. That policy should include not disparaging healthy foods, especially fruits and vegetables. Overall, the policy should set nutrition standards for determining which of your products are appropriate to market to children. Also, it should address the full range of marketing used by your company, including advertising, websites and advergames, product development and reformulation, premiums and incentives, licensing agreements, merchandise with brand information, sponsorship, the placement of products in retail stores, and in-school marketing.

Many parents feel that it has become increasingly difficult for them to feed their children a healthful diet given the incredible abundance and aggressive marketing of low-nutrition foods to children. That is not to say that parents do not bear the ultimate responsibility for feeding their children. Rather, parents’ job could be made easier, if they did not have to contend with billions of dollars worth of marketing for nutrition-poor foods.

We hope that Kellogg will discontinue this Apple Jacks marketing campaign immediately, on television, on your website or through any other venue. We also urge you to look more broadly at your marketing practices and establish strong guidelines for responsible food marketing to children. We hope that we can work together to address child nutrition and encourage children to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Pivonka, Ph.D., R.D.  Margo G. Wootan, D.Sc.
President and CEO                   Director, Nutrition Policy
Produce for Better Health Foundation             Center for Science in the Public Interest