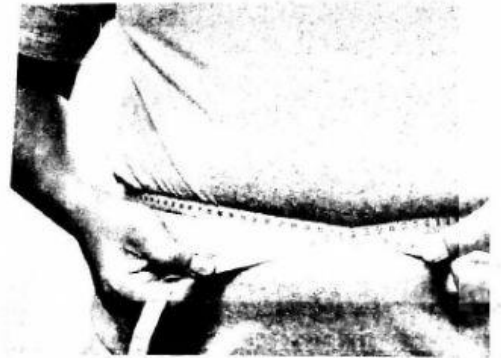


IS THE FOOD INDUSTRY TRUSTWORTHY?

I For many years our daily diet has been based on the food pyramid created by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). This pyramid displays the recommended amounts of nutrients, such as protein, carbohydrates (carbs) and fat, that people should consume daily to maintain good health. According to this pyramid, carbs such as bread and pasta should be about half the food intake, while fats should not exceed 10%. However, though people have followed these recommendations, the obesity epidemic has spread and more people are now prone to other illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer.



II A new study published in 2017 may explain why this has happened. The study, which was carried out in 18 countries over a seven-year period, revealed that a low-fat diet might be dangerous to our health, while consuming high levels of fat decreases mortality rates. These findings have caused great confusion among people whose diets have been based for years on the assumption that fat is bad for one's health and should be consumed very moderately. The same study states that consuming large quantities of carbs is dangerous because carbs turn into glucose, a type of sugar, when they are consumed. Excess glucose, according to this study, is to be blamed for obesity and other illnesses.



MODULE G

20 **III** Is this really new information? It turns out that these were known facts. In the 1960s, the sugar industry stopped funding research whose preliminary results showed a link between sugar intake and heart disease; findings that the sugar industry wanted to hide. As a result, the study was terminated and the results were never published. Moreover, evidence has emerged that the sugar industry paid scientists in the 1960s to point out saturated fat, and not sugar, as a cause of heart disease. Similarly, according to the New York Times, Coca Cola funded
25 research which recommended that people should focus on exercising rather than on what they eat or drink. Consequently, people kept consuming large quantities of sugar and other carbs even though it endangered their health.

IV The food industry is not the only one to blame. The American government has its share too. Any government has two conflicting roles: on the one hand, it should be responsible for
30 promoting the nutritional health of the public. On the other hand, it has to protect the interests of the food growers and the food industry. Both have strong lobbies that have influenced the USDA's recommendations, often at the expense of public health. This should be of great interest to us since the food pyramid adopted by the USDA has become a model in many countries all over the world. Governments, including ours, adopted this pyramid without
35 reservation.

V But who is to tell us that the current research is scientifically valid? If we can't rely on scientific research and on our governments, what then should we do? Probably, all we should do is avoid processed food and sweetened drinks, and eat in moderation.