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www.who.int1211 GENEVA 27 SWITZERLAND - TELEPHONE: (41) 22.791.21.11 - FAX: (41) 22.791.31.11 - E-MAIL: inf@who.int**Note for the press N°17
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"5 A DAY" SYMPOSIUM TO ENCOURAGE INCREASED FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION IN ASIA-PACIFIC

***Boosting fruit and vegetable consumption can help address global epidemics of obesity
and noncommunicable diseases, says WHO***

Geneva - The *4th International 5 A Day Symposium* will bring health professionals, nongovernmental organizations, retailers and producer industry representatives together to strengthen initiatives worldwide to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. Key issues include the need for effective programmes to address the international epidemic of overweight and obesity, and strengthening public-private partnerships to promote fruit and vegetables. The symposium, co-sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH), will take place in Christchurch, New Zealand, from August 9-10.

The theme of this year's event is "From Farm to Plate: Globalizing 5 A Day to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Worldwide." This year, special attention will focus on encouraging countries in the Asia/Pacific region to develop new 5 A Day-type initiatives, such as public-private retail partnerships with supermarkets.

"WHO works across the entire spectrum of nutritional health problems, from malnutrition to obesity," said Dr Catherine Le Galès Camus, WHO's Assistant-Director General, Noncommunicable Diseases & Mental Health. "As well as helping prevent chronic noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and some cancers, adequate fruit and vegetable intake also helps reduce nutritional deficiencies and increases resistance to infectious diseases.

The World Health Assembly recently adopted the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, which provides countries with a strong foundation for improving all aspects of nutrition. 5 A Day-type programmes make a positive contribution to the Strategy's goals by encouraging multi-sectoral collaboration to increase fruit and vegetable consumption."

The World Health Report 2002 attributes at least 2.7 million deaths globally each year to low fruit and vegetable intake. Chronic diseases now make up 60% of deaths and 49% of the global disease burden. Already, 79% of these diseases are occurring in developing countries. In addition, globally there are more than one billion adults overweight -- at least 300 million of them obese. There are an estimated 171 million people with diabetes worldwide, a figure likely to double by 2030. In developing countries the number of people with diabetes is expected to increase by 150% in the next 25 years. High intake of fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy diet can make an important contribution to preventing chronic NCDs and their risk factors.

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"WHO is actively promoting the increased consumption of fruit and vegetables," said Dr Robert Beaglehole, WHO Director for Chronic Diseases and Health Promotion. "We are partnering with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations in this area and will be continuing to strengthen our work with all stakeholders to boost fruit and vegetable consumption for all sections of the community." Dr Beaglehole also welcomed the participation of an increasing number of small island and developing nations to this year's 5-A-Day symposium. Attendance by developing countries increased from two countries last year, to 15.

The symposium will examine ways to adapt the 5 A Day fruit and vegetable promotion concept to different national realities in developing countries, and how to influence school, retail and workplace environments to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. Key messages will include the importance of prevention in addressing chronic NCDs, and the role that 5 A Day-type programmes can play in influencing parental decisions and educating the young on healthy eating to instill life-long patterns.

The symposium is presented by the non-profit organisation PBH, which coordinates the US 5 A Day programme, together with WHO and co-sponsored by the US National Cancer Institute. Symposium hosts include the national 5+ A Day Programme coordinated by United Fresh New Zealand (Inc), the Cancer Society of New Zealand Inc, and the New Zealand Ministry of Health. Leading speakers include Dr Beaglehole; Eric Bost, Undersecretary of the US Department of Agriculture; Dr Mary Serdula, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USA; Dr Boyd Swinburn, School of Health Sciences, Deakin University, Australia; and Dr Jim Mann, Otago University, New Zealand.

5 a day is as an international programme designed to encourage fruit and vegetable consumption, with the specific goal of encouraging all women, children and men to consume at least five servings of fruit and vegetables every day.

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All WHO Press Releases, Fact Sheets and Features as well as other information on this subject can be obtained on the Internet on the WHO home page www.who.int.