

Research Status and Gaps Related to Environment, Policy and Nutrition

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Three Challenges

1. Timing
2. Lawyers
3. Partners

Challenge #1: Timing

- Policy changes are happening quickly
- Changes are happening - with or without us
- If we want to participate, we must figure out a way to keep up

Solution #1: Timing

- When cities and states start pursuing a strategy (like menu labeling), the field needs to mobilize quickly to do a series of coordinated studies to test the idea
- We need a faster way to release study findings – “working papers”
- Luckily for us, the lawyers slow things down so we may be able to catch up

Challenge #2: Lawyers

- Some research on the food environment has financial implications for the food and beverage industry
- Where there are industries and financial implications, the lawyers are not far behind
- Lawyers and scientists have different agendas

“Evidence of Flabby Content in City’s Calorie Push”

**New York Sun
April 7, 2008**

Solution #2: Lawyers

- The RCT is not a feasible research design in much of this research
- The field needs to set its own standards by which to evaluate the strength of evidence
- These standards should be clearly articulated to help both the scientists and the lawyers evaluate policy related research

Challenge #3: Partners (b)

- Segments of the food industry have expressed interest in being a partner
- How can scientists avoid conflicts of interest?

Solutions #3: Partners

- Guidelines are needed for our field to help scientists engage in positive partnerships that will help move the science forward
- Guidelines are also needed to help scientists avoid getting caught up in real or perceived conflicts of interest

Challenge #3: Partners (a)

- Some research cannot be done without non-academic partners
- Government agencies and advocacy organizations can be logical partners
- Forming these partnerships requires time and support