



EFFAT

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM TRADE UNIONS

FBT-06-047-ED

Brussels, 22 March 2006

European Commission
Directorate General Health and Consumer Protection
Unit C4 – Health determinants
L-2920 Luxembourg

Re: Consultation on Green Paper “Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases”

Dear Madam, dear Sir,

EFFAT¹ welcomes the publication of the Green Paper on “Promoting healthy diets and physical activity” as well as the consultation procedure organised by the Commission following the release of the document.

Trade unions movement are very much concerned and active in the field of the health of the workers. Nutrition and food safety are as important a right as occupational health and safety. Many workers spend at least a third of their day or half of their waking hours at work. Added to the time spent for commuting to and from work, few time remains for the purchase of fresh and healthy ingredients and the preparation on healthy and balanced meal. This explains why now a significant part of the meals are taken outside of the home place.

As the Green Paper stresses, workplaces are thus a setting which can successfully promote healthy diets. Trade unions and works councils are in favour of healthy meals at the workplace. Works councils and trade unions have participation and co-decision rights as far as issues in relation to canteens are concerned.

In Many countries, trade unions already launched initiatives in favour of the improvement of the workplace nutrition. As an example, buoyed by a strong economy and social awareness among the Austrian people, six Austrian trade unions have jointly established (together with catering companies, employees, food experts etc...) a catering concept called “Light, Healthy and Fair Eating at the Workplace”. The “light and healthy” part of the slogan means a deliberate effort to address the trends of unhealthy eating, rising obesity and chronic disease rates. The “fair” part of the unions’ slogan refers to whether the food served in canteens was produced and acquired in an environmentally and socially friendly way.

The impact of such programme is broad for about 1.5 million workers in Austria use workplace canteens everyday. Eating out during the day is increasingly common as well as increasingly important as long commuting time prevent workers from going home for lunches and put them under time pressure for the preparation of fresh dishes for dinner.

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¹ EFFAT, the European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism sectors, represents 122 national trade unions from 36 European countries. As one of the main stakeholders in the food chain and a recognised European social partners EFFAT defends the interests of more than 2 600 000 Trade Unions members towards the European Institutions, European industrial federations and enterprise management.

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Here are some examples of actions (more information can be found online at www.argehelix.at/):

- fair weekly menu;
- edition of booklets on successful dietary habits and menus in canteens;
- organisation of conferences;
- study assessing the criteria for canteen procurement, to promote healthy and High-quality food offerings in the workplace.

In the same perspective of guaranteeing sustainable food production and services, EFFAT concluded this month with FERCO, the European Federation of the contract-catering companies (e.g. Compass, Aramark...), a "guide to the economically most advantageous offer in Contract Catering" that I invite you to consult at the following link www.contract-catering-guide.org.

EFFAT is looking forward to contributing to the next initiatives from the European Commission in relation to food issues and calls upon you and the Commission services to involve all the stakeholders of the food chain for the achievement of a successful European food policy.

Yours sincerely,



Harald Wiedenhofer
Secretary General

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