



Fachverband der Nahrungs- und
Genussmittelindustrie Österreichs (FIAA)



Die Lebensmittelindustrie

WIRTSCHAFTSKAMMER
ÖSTERREICH

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Food Industries Association of Austria
Fédération des Industries
Alimentaires Autrichiennes

**Position of the Food Industries
Association of Austria**

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Green Paper - "Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: Towards a European strategy for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases"

Generally accepted by science to constitute the main sources of preventable chronic diseases overweight and obesity are induced by an unhealthy lifestyle and diet as well as by a lack of physical activity.

There is as well spread opinion upon the serious, far reaching consequences as on the multi-causal character of this phenomenon.

Many coherences are very well defined, whereas many other supposed or obvious causales are lacking scientifically exact basis.

Only a strategy that takes into account all social implications of the phenomenon and aims at long term changing lifestyles and life-environment can be successful.

Therefore it will be necessary not only to define actions taken on the EU-level but also to complement national efforts.

It will be important to define and involve the engagement of national stake holders.

To define and perform preventive measures for reaching sustainable results all stake holders who are responsible in the socio-economic playing –field and for influencing public opinion, especially the school- and education sector have to be addressed.

The Austrian Food Industry therefore welcomes the approach of the Commission to preprend a broad and open consultation process before defining and deciding on politics for the prevention of overweight and obesity and related diseases.

Industry is committed to play an active role and make useful and efficient contributions to solving the problem in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders involved.

At the same time we stress the necessity of a sound and scientific fundament for all public policy interventions outlined in the Green Paper.

Therefore scientific research is necessary to address some very important questions related with overweight and obesity in order to create a much better understanding of the problem.

Data for analysing the main causal factors for obesity are lacking validated comparability. Especially our knowledge about the sociological related factors for obesity is far away from being sufficient to be a trustfull basis for interventions.

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Many observed prevalences lack scientific prove and can therefore not be compared. To give a sound science based fundament for a series of proposed actions, measures and recommendations as best practice, outlined in the Green Paper we strongly believe that there is a need of concerted European research. Only the results of scientific resaearch will make it possible to define priorities, ranking and emphasis of different actions. There is enough scientific expertise for research within the European Community. What is needed is a clear declaration in the Green Paper that research is necessary - and the political will to finance.

In a separate section the Green paper refers to consumer information, advertising and marketing. As before manufacturers are committed with full engagement to their responsibility especially concerning clear and consistent information about the nutrition content of its products in order to enable customer an informed choice. Nutrition information has to be seen as complementary tool for helping consumers to select foods that are appropriate to their needs and lifestyle preferences. It must not be misused as an instrument for consumer education. At the same time nutrition information depends on the degree of consumers knowledge. It goes far beyond the responsibility of industry and it is certainly not the function of food labelling to provide customers with that sort of knowledge.

Industry also is committed to instruments of selfregulation in order to take full product and social responsibility. There are many examples of self regulatory instruments in the food industry sector on European and national level as well as within multinational acting companies. Industry practices already a high degree of self regulation. It would be contraproductive – as it seems to be implied by the Green Paper – to alternatively forsee compulsory legal instruments in order to collateralizing the effectiveness of self regulation. Moreover it must be in the responsibility of industry itself to permanently validate and improve its self regulatory instruments.

When it comes to the complementary side of nutrition information, the nutrition education, it must be clear that the efforts of industry can only be fully effective if at the same time public authorities take full responsibility for the social dimension of the problem. Especially the education and school sector has to be adressed and reminded of its duty.

In solving the problem it will be a crucial factor that all stakeholders contribute in raising awareness and changing of behavior in order to help creating attitudes that a balanced diet and sufficient physical activity are accepted and adopted as personal lifestyle.

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