



SVERIGES KONSUMENTRÅD
THE SWEDISH CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION

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*European Commission
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Unit C4 – Health Determinants
L-2920 Luxembourg*

Green paper, “Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases (ECCG2005 106)”

The Swedish Consumers' Association would like to present its views on the Commission Green Paper, “Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases”.

Questions of physical inactivity and unhealthy food habits are both issues that The Swedish Consumers' Association have as high priorities. We therefore welcome the present initiative as addressing a highly relevant problem.

It is our opinion there are two fundamental problems that must be addressed if the present issues are to be solved.

Firstly, it must be fully appreciated that this problem stretches over a vast numbers of sectors. A horizontal approach, both by the Community and the individual Member States, is therefore crucial when approaching these issues.

Secondly, the information and education deficit that surrounds these issues must be fully addresses. Large-scale efforts are necessary within all entities of society if that deficit is to be regulated.

These two issues, together with others that are raised by the Green Paper, are further developed below.

1. Structures and tools at Community level

1.1. Health across EU policies

- **Q1. What are the concrete contributions which Community policies, if any, should make towards the promotion of healthy diets and physical activity, and towards creating environments which make healthy choices easy choices?**

It is the opinion of The Swedish Consumers' Association, that one of the absolute keys to success in promoting healthy diets and defeating obesity, is that measures must be taken across the entire field of community policy and law making. If the question therefore posed is whether the Commission bears a responsibility in the promotion of healthy diets and physical activity, our answer is clearly 'Yes'. Along the same line of thinking as has been governing in the revision work with the consumer law aquis, a broad approach to these problems has to be taken. In that work, the potential contribution by the Commission is substantial.

An important example of such successful actions would include giving attention to health considerations in the work with agricultural policy making. Subsidising the production of for example wine or sugar could very well make perfect sense in terms of promoting particularly sensitive production areas, but it might at the same time lead to disastrous results when it comes to the intake of unhealthy sugar products and calories for the consumers.

The need for strong measures to be taken in the direct sphere of this problem, while being both much needed and desirable, are simply not sufficient if the goal is to accomplish a substantial difference in the physical well-being of the average European citizen. For this to be achieved, large scale efforts across the field of the Commissions work is not only much needed, but absolutely crucial.

In practical terms, The Swedish Consumers' Association promotes a procedure where these issues are given attention in every type of financing effort that is considered by the Commission. The example with subsidising agricultural products that might have a negative impact on health has already been given, but similar examples can be drawn from most areas. It would for example be desirable to consider the effect certain transportation or infrastructure projects might have on the physical activity of the people taking the benefit of increased communication possibilities.

Further, when financially supporting any local project by awarding regional support, aspects such as physical health, activity or nutrition could easily be promoted and safeguarded. Giving precedence to projects that work for increasing physical activity, for example financial support to recipients involved in local sporting activities, is a good example of how small but important measures could take effect and together achieve a change in the behavioural patterns.

- **Q2. Which kind of Community or national measures could contribute towards improving the attractiveness, availability, accessibility and affordability of fruits and vegetables?**

Along the same line of thinking as was presented in general above, the situation of fruit and vegetables constitutes a prime example of products which would receive increased support and attention if health effects were given increased consideration. The obvious fact that fruit and vegetables are substantially healthier than for example wine and alcohol must be remembered and afforded the deserved attention in the process of financial agricultural support.

Q3. On which areas related to nutrition, physical activity, the development of tools for the analysis of related disorders, and consumer behaviour is more research needed?

Even though this is an area in which a wind of change is in fact blowing presently, there are still major topics on which our knowledge is clearly deficient. Within the area of behavioural science these deficiencies are particularly obvious. For example, what is the impact of marketing practices on peoples eating habits? Undoubtedly this issue has been studied in other contexts in the past, but further research should also be conducted with a view to the impact of commercial pressure on consumption. This and other blanks within our sphere of knowledge are absolutely crucial to fill in if we are to understand and rectify the present problems.

1.2. The Public Health Action Programme

- **Q4. How can the availability and comparability of data on obesity be improved, in particular with a view to determining the precise geographical and socio-economic distribution of this condition?**

To a large extent this is a question of allocating resources. In general, we would favour giving *Eurostat* the necessary resources to fulfil this role. By giving this body the necessary resources to keep and compare data on obesity, the work with determining the precise geographical and socio-economic distribution of this condition could be greatly simplified and improved.

- **Q5. How can the programme contribute to raising the awareness of the potential which healthy dietary habits and physical activity have for reducing the risk for chronic diseases amongst decision makers, health professionals, the media and the public at large?**

When it comes to the issue of raising the awareness regarding these questions, we would like to promote the important role that could be played by the consumer movement, by other NGOs and also by the public educational system. Particularly the latter of these are of great importance and we strongly support any Community initiative that strives to strengthen the position of consumer related topics in schools.

Besides this fundamental point, Community funding could also help in launching educational projects run by the consumer movement and by other NGOs. NGOs of particular importance in this respect include the popular educational organisations. They possess both the necessary experience and hold the infrastructure to educate and create awareness.

- **Q6. Which are the most appropriate dissemination channels for the existing evidence?**

The single most important channel for spreading information about these topics is the public school system. Raising the awareness in coming generations is the most certain way in which one can make sure that future generations avoid the mistakes committed by the now living.

Besides this main channel of spreading information, the most appropriate ones are those that enjoy the most trust by consumers. Government authority is therefore an obvious party that must take a great responsibility in raising this type of awareness. Moreover, consumer organisations are a further example of private and semi-public bodies in which consumers in general put great trust. In many European countries, consumer organisations carry a flawless reputation of independence unbiased commitment and their role as a counterweight against governmental influence, makes these bodies ideal for spreading this type of information.

2. Areas for action

2.1. Consumer information, advertising and marketing

- **Q7. When providing nutrition information to the consumer, what are the major nutrients, and categories of products, to be considered and why?**

It has been the long-standing demand of The Swedish Consumers' Association that all products must be labelled with full information regarding its contents and nutritional value. To draw a differentiating line, saying that information is needed for certain products but not for others, is simply not relevant. All products must be fully labelled, enabling consumers to make informed and aware choices.

The content of such information is difficult to regulate exactly, but the crucial criterion must at all times be the need for the consumers to make informed and aware choices. With that being said, we would in particular like to stress the need for full nutrition information when it comes to sugar and carbohydrates. Informing the consumer of the type of sugar included in a certain product is likely to get rid of a major cause of misconceptions among consumers today.

Further, we would also like to stress the need for a harmonisation of nutrition facts within the Community. With the increased cross-border trade of food products today, the ability for the consumer to assimilate the information provided even on 'foreign' products is crucial.

- **Q8. Which kind of education is required in order to enable consumers to fully understand the information in food labels, and who should provide it?**

To a large extent, the answer to this question is dependant on what group of consumers is being targeted, in particular whether it is children or adults. Regardless of which, however, it is absolutely clear that there is a major information deficit among consumers when it comes to nutrition and health knowledge.

Starting with information aimed towards children, it is the opinion of The Swedish Consumers Association that a crucial contributor to the education and awareness of the youngest, maintains to be the public school system. In our opinion it is necessary to both increase the amount of attention that is given to consumer and health related issues in the school educational system, but also to make sure that the educational process is commenced at a much earlier stage than is the case today. In particular, education in these questions should commence even at pre-school age.

Moreover, the average adult consumer is also in great need of information efforts. One important area where such information and education could indeed be provided is at the work place. Making nutrition and health questions a part of the training one normally would receive during an employment, is example of a simple effort that could have a substantial impact on consumer awareness.

In addition, the consumer movement and the organisations connected thereto, continues to play a potentially very important role providing consumers with information on health and nutrition issues.

- **Q9. Are voluntary codes ("self-regulation") an adequate tool for limiting the advertising and marketing of energy-dense and micronutrient foods? What would be the alternatives to be considered if self-regulation fails?**

The advertising and marketing of energy-dense and micronutrient foods is a subject in which The Swedish Consumer Association has been heavily involved during the last couple of years. In particular we have focused on the effect this has on children, where we consider the issue to have particularly disturbing effects.

Against the background of increasing obesity among children, The Swedish Consumers' Association launched during 2005 a project to study the phenomenon of advertising of advertising guided towards children and the effects it has on health.

The project is financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers and The Swedish Consumers' Agency. The Swedish Consumers' Association is responsible for the project and the Centre for Media and Communication Studies at the University of Lund is engaged to produce a scientific method and make a solid evaluation.

It is clear beyond doubt that advertising has an impact on the food habits of children. It is also the strong opinion of The Swedish Consumers' Association that self-regulation is **not** alone an adequate measure to deal with this issue. The seriousness of this problem has now grown so strong that the only measure that can summon the required force to create a substantial and lasting change, is an act of legislation. In particular, the Commission is in a favourable position to take the initiative as the creator of such legislation.

This opinion is one that we have not previously shared with the Swedish government. However, during 2005 Ann-Christin Nykvist, the Swedish Minister for Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs, launched her so-called 'Food manifesto'. In this nine-point programme of efforts to deal with problems associated with unhealthy food, the Minister demanded a stop to junk food advertisements targeting children. The Swedish Consumers' Association fully support this demand of the Swedish Minister.

- **Q10. How can effectiveness in self-regulation be defined, implemented and monitored? Which measures should be taken towards ensuring that the credulity and lacking media literacy of vulnerable consumers are not exploited by advertising, marketing and promotion activities?**

Given what was presented in connection with the previous question, it is perhaps obvious that support the adopting of a more radical approach to regulate corporate behaviour. In particular, putting a general limitation on the advertising and marketing of certain products to make sure that vulnerable consumers are not exploited by such activities is a measure that we support. Indeed, we find it exceedingly difficult to defend why these types of marketing activities should be allowed at all in a modern society. Further, the potential damage a general limitation on certain marketing activities would do to the companies that indulge in these is at any rate a small cost compared to the price that is today born by society and its consumers.

2.2. Consumer education

- **Q11. How can consumers best be enabled to make informed choices and take effective action?**

Again, this is primarily a question of strengthening consumer education. As has been emphasised previously, focusing on the position of consumer education in schools and public education is perhaps the two most important means in enabling consumers to make informed choices and take effective action.

- **Q12. What contributions can public-private partnerships make towards consumer education?**

The contributions that can be made by public-private partnerships will of course to a large extent depend on the particular circumstances. However, in general such constellations could contribute greatly by producing EDU-material, thereby assisting in the informing of consumers. The production of written material and the engagement in different communication activities, are both examples of ways in which public-private partnerships could help in boosting consumer awareness.

- **Q13. In the field of nutrition and physical activity, which should be the key messages to give to consumers, how and by whom should they be delivered?**

Again, it is vital that the parties that enjoy consumer confidence provide this information. A part from the ones already mentioned, government authorities and consumer organisations in particular, we also believe that the public healthcare could contribute greatly in this respect. Not only is this an entity that in general enjoys the public's trust, but it is also a source of unique knowledge that must be utilised.

2.3. A focus on children and young people

- **Q14. What are good examples for improving the nutritional value of school meals, and how can parents be informed on how to improve the nutritional value of home meals?**

Regarding the first part of this question the answer will to a great extent depend on the position of school meals in the relevant country. In general, we support the concept of meals provided by the school itself, as opposed to where this is sold separately by vendors or simply not at all. Where this is the case, contracts with providers should be made with an eye to issues such as nutritional value and appropriateness in serving the relevant food to children. Energy-dense snacks and sugar-sweetened soft drinks would then simply not fulfil the necessary criterion.

For the case where independent vendors provide school meals directly, similar criterion as for the situation where independent suppliers are contracted should be adopted, again with a view to excluding food that is unhealthy or otherwise inappropriate.

Where none of the previous two is the case, i.e. where school children bring their own meals with them, it is crucial that parents are provided with the necessary information. This is not a situation that is any different from the general information issues that have been dealt with in this paper. Making sure that consumers, or in this particular context, parents, are provided with the necessary information and education is a massive task that will involve the dedication of a number of entities, both private and public.

- **Q15. What is good practice for the provision of physical activity in schools on a regular basis?**

A part from the purely educational aspect dealt with above, it is also crucial that actual physical exercise is given greater space and attention. In schools this must remain an obligatory part of the curriculum, but efforts to increase the possibilities of physical exercise at the work place must also be promoted.

However, it must be remembered that this question is to a great extent one of culture and behavioural patterns of Europeans. With that in mind, these are changes that must be allowed to take time and also be given attention at many different levels of government. From the Community perspective, one such method of giving attention could be to financially sponsor projects that have the consequence of increasing the amount of physical activity Europeans engage in.

- **Q16. What is good practice for fostering healthy dietary choices at schools, especially as regards the excessive intake of energy-dense snacks and sugar-sweetened soft drinks?**

In line with what has been explained above, the principle means for making sure that healthy dietary choices at school are made, is either to regulate the food that is sold or served, or to make sure that the parents providing their children with lunch meals are equipped with the right information and education. If this can be achieved, problems such as excessive intake of energy-dense snacks or sugar-sweetened soft drinks can be dealt with effectively.

- **Q17. How can the media, health service, civil society and relevant sectors of industry support health education efforts made by schools? What role can public-private partnerships play in this regard?**

As far as the support that can be provided by civil society, public-private partnerships to support health education made by schools, this have been dealt with at several places elsewhere in this paper. We have therefore chosen to in this question focus on the role of health services.

One entity whose efforts could have a great impact on health education in schools, are the schools' own health services. With the right effort to educate the school medical personnel, they would hold a potentially very important position thanks to the close relationship with the children. Moreover, not only such an effort mean that children would have medical knowledge at a close distance, it would also mean that an emphasis is put on preventive work in dealing with these issues.

2.4. Food availability, physical activity and health education at the work place

- **Q18. How can employers succeed in offering healthy choices at workplace canteens, and in improving the nutritional value of canteen meals?**

Along the same line of thinking as in relation to the medical services provided by schools, company health care could play a very important role when it comes to healthy choices at the workplace. Working preventively to avoid disruptions of the employees' health, is not only something that would benefit the employee and therefore also society, but it would also make good commercial sense for any responsible company.

- **Q19. What measures would encourage and facilitate the practice of physical activity during breaks, and on the way to and from work?**

Another method for companies to maintain a healthy workforce is to encourage physical activity for its employees. In particular, giving the employees the possibility of physical exercise during office hours is an example of a simple method that could have far-reaching positive effects. Other efforts could include organising physical group activities and competitions, or similar actions that strives towards activating the employees physically.

2.5. Building overweight and obesity prevention and treatment into health services.

- **Q20. Which measures, and at what level, are needed to ensure a stronger integration aiming at promoting healthy diets and physical activity into health services?**

When it comes to the general role of health services, the possessor of medical knowledge that must be put to use if any issue of public health is to be fully dealt with, it is our view that the work should be directed towards preventive measures. It is through such work, using medical knowledge to pick up on these problems at the earliest possible stage, that the benefits of health services are most efficiently put to use.

For the work of health services to be given this direction obviously requires decision-making on the highest political level. However, working preventively from a medical perspective with these questions, questions which are in fact to a great extent medical in nature, is not only the most efficient way to attack the problem from a medical point of view, it is also the most efficient way in terms of government spending.

2.6. Addressing the obesogenic environment

- Q21. In which ways can public policies contribute to ensure that physical activity be “built into” daily routines?

This question has also been touched upon elsewhere; it is absolutely crucial that the physical perspective is allowed to influence decision-making at all levels, public policy making being no exception, if this problem is to be efficiently dealt with. As far as this perspective in public policy making is concerned, prime examples would be in the course of city planning. Having in mind the effect that improved transportation possibilities has on physical activity is a very good example of such cross-subject thinking. The practical results would then for example include making sure that public pathways are cycle lanes are planned for.

- Q22. Which measures are needed to foster the development of environments that are conducive to physical activity?

See the above.

2.7. Socio-economic inequalities

- Q23. Which measures, and at what level, would promote healthy diets and physical activity towards population groups and households belonging to certain socio-economic categories, and enable these groups to adopt healthier lifestyles?

If any type of measure is to have full-effect through all socio-economic categories, including those where they traditionally have found it more difficult to find a hold, it is absolutely crucial that the principle of vicinity is allowed to be governing. In summary, this means that not only must the measures be the correct ones; they must also be provided by the correct entity. It therefore simultaneously becomes obvious that certain socio-economic groups might be more dependent on receiving information from its closest vicinity. Examples of entities, which would have a particular responsibility in such cases, would typically be employers, NGOs or school personnel.

- Q24. How can the “clustering of unhealthy habits” that has frequently been demonstrated for certain socio-economic groups be addressed?

To a large extent this is a problem that goes well beyond the scope of merely physical activity and public health. To battle the problem of socio-economic groups and the clustering of healthy habits within these groups, raises such complex issues as segregation, discrimination, equal rights, right to full employment and so on. While these questions are all beyond the relatively narrow problem that we are dealing with presently, it is at the same time crucial to remember that they all have a bearing on it.

2.8. Fostering an integrated and comprehensive approach towards the promotion of healthy diets and physical activity

- Q25. Which are the most important elements of an integrated and comprehensive approach towards the promotion of healthy diets and physical activity?

As this paper has hopefully been able to show, the most important elements of an integrated and comprehensive approach towards the promotion of healthy diets and physical activity, is to devote great resources towards education where this is most

efficient, and to maintain a horizontal mode of attack, keeping in mind that these issues are included in most public policy decision making.

To approach these questions correctly, it is vital to remember that what one is seeking is to achieve a change in the behavioural patterns and culture of Europeans. That fact will have implications not only for the time-plan within which one can expect to see a substantial change to the present situation, but also that to achieve that change it is vital that measures are taken at all levels in society.

- **Q26. Which role at national and at Community level?**

Given the above, the vital point to make absolutely clear, is that both individual Member states and the Community has a crucial part to play. Member states will be the only parties with the necessary power and influence to create a change in the areas that are within their sphere of self-determination, and the Community will have a similar role in the sphere where it has been afforded with decision-making powers. It is also very important that the two entities do not act without collaboration; exchange of information and a constant dialogue is crucial to accomplish the best possible result.

2.9. Recommendations for nutrient intakes and for the development of food-based dietary guidelines

- **Q27. In which way could social and cultural variations and different regional and national dietary habits be taken into account in food-based dietary guidelines at a European level?**

The best way to make sure that cultural variations are respected and put to use, is to use the concept of 'best practices' in the Community work with dietary guidelines. In that way all the differences that are present within the multicultural European continent is both respected and maintained. However, it does also mean that one recognises and takes advantage of the different experiences that this continent holds.

- **Q28. How can the gaps between proposed nutrient targets and actual consumption patterns be overcome?**

When there is a gap between the proposed nutritional guidelines and actual consumption habits, this can only be the result of three problems; either the information does not reach the consumers correctly so that they are simply not aware what is healthy and unhealthy food, or the information reaches the consumers but that does not give rise to a change in their food habits, or, as is perhaps most likely, the problem is caused by a combination of the two.

With that being said, it is obvious that two measures are crucial to remedy this discrepancy; firstly, information must reach the consumers in a way and from a sender that is appropriate, and secondly, education and similar efforts must be added to make sure that consumer awareness is increased and that behavioural patterns therefore can be altered.

- **Q29. How can dietary guidelines be communicated to consumers?**

The issue of communicating dietary guidelines to consumers is in principal no different from any other of the educational or information efforts that have been discussed in this paper. Parties with a particular interest and responsibility include, therefore, public schools, government authorities, consumer organisations, employers, health services and so on.

- **Q30. In which way could nutrient profile scoring systems such as developed recently in UK contribute to such developments?**

Such systems could definitely have an impact on consumer behaviour and therefore be of value. However, it must under no circumstances lead to an over-belief in this kind of fairly simple measures. While they could indeed be efficient to a certain extent, it is also a very blunt instrument. It is one instrument to deal with these issues, but it is far from the most important or for that matter even a sufficient one.

2.10. Cooperation beyond the European Union

- **Q31. Under which conditions should the Community engage in exchanging experience and identifying best practice between the EU and non-EU countries? If so, through which means?**

Along the same line of thinking as was presented above, exchange of experiences with non-EU countries as a part of the work with establishing best practices for dietary guidelines, is a very positive idea. There is no reason for why the seeking of experience and knowledge should be limited to Europe only, and it is therefore an approach that we fully support.

To the greatest possible extent we believe that the existing channels could be used for the exchange of this type of information. Examples of such are The Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue and The Transatlantic Business Dialogue, the former in which The Swedish Consumers' Association has taken an active part, but there are of course others as well.

2.11. Other issues

- **Q32. Are there issues not addressed in the present Green paper which need consideration when looking at the European dimension of the promotion of diet, physical activity and health?**

As this paper has hopefully shown, there are a number of issues that we feel have not been afforded the appropriate consideration. In particular, two issues deserve to be mentioned.

Firstly, the role that is played by alcohol as a creator of these problems is not fully appreciated. Both as a major source of carbohydrates and calories, but also for example as a questionable recipient of hefty annual agricultural support, its implications must be scrutinised further.

Secondly, the fact that solving these problems will to a large extent depend on managing to change the behavioural patterns of consumers is not fully appreciated. This becomes especially obvious as this aspect is completely ignored in the discussion regarding the further research that must be conducted on these topics.

- **Q33. Which of these issues addressed in the present Green paper should receive first priority, and which may be considered less pressing?**

Despite the wide variety of measures that have been presented in this paper, it is not an easy task to decide which one should receive first priority. To a large extent this is caused by our fundamental attitude towards solving this problem where a broad and horizontal approach is needed.

It is, however, at the same time apparent that one is forced to start somewhere. In that case, measures such as research, the limiting marketing efforts, labelling of food and creating the necessary educational platforms in public schools and public education, are the more pressing issues.

3. Summary

The problems that this Green paper seeks to address are as complicated as they are vital. Solving them would not only mean changing the behavioural patterns of Europeans, but also their cultural habits. It is crucial to recognise this complexity of the problem.

While being complicated, the problem is far from impossible to solve. With the right measures and dedication the current negative trend of malnutrition and physical inactivity could be stopped.

The first thing that must be understood if this is to be accomplished is that this is a problem that covers many different areas of society. Thus, any attempt to deal with it must be horizontal in approach, attacking the problem from several different angles. To a large extent this will mean introducing these questions into discussions where they have previously not been present. The examples of city-planning and agricultural support have already been mentioned.

It will also mean that a great deal of collaboration is needed between the Community and individual Member States. The Community must not only allow these issues to influence all types of policy-making, it must also to a great extent take a coordinating role; supporting the efforts made by individual Member States and making sure that efforts interrelate and create a functioning whole becomes vital.

With new questions being brought on to the political arena, also brings with it a need for research and deeper understanding. For example, what is the impact of commercial pressure on consumers' food habits? This question as well as others needs to be studied and fully understood.

The second vital part of attacking this problem is solving the information and education deficit. This too is a problem that must be attacked from different angles and at different levels; school education, public education, employment education, together with information efforts by consumer organisations, public authorities, health services, and so on, all have a major part to play in that effort.

Further, the starting point must at all times be the principle of vicinity, recognising that it is not simply a question of spreading information, but also a question of making sure that it is received. Using this principle as the starting point will also mean ensuring that consumers belonging to all types socio-economic groups will be reached.

This position was decided by the Executive Committee of the Swedish Consumer's Association. In its preparation participated Jens Henriksson, International secretary, and the undersigned.

Stockholm, dated as above

Jan Bertoft
Secretary General

Jonas Adolfsson
Legal assistant
(presenting)

Sammanfattning

De problem som denna Grönbok adresserar är lika komplicerade som de är angelägna. Att lösa dem innebär inte bara en förändring av människors beteendemönster, utan även deras kultur. Denna komplexitet som detta problem innebär är avgörande att förstå.

Trots att problemet är oerhört komplicerat är det samtidigt långt ifrån omöjligt att lösa. Genom en kombination av resurser och hängivenhet kan den pågående negativa trenden med osunda kostvanor och fysiskt inaktivitet vändas.

Den första sak som måste förstås för att detta skall kunna uppnås, är att detta är ett problem som spänner över många olika områden i samhället. Därför är det avgörande att problematiken attackeras horisontellt och från flera olika vinklar. Detta kommer vidare att innebära att dessa frågor introduceras i diskussioner där de tidigare inte har funnits. Exempelen med stadsplanering och EU:s jordbruksstöd har redan nämnts.

Det kommer också att innebära att ett stort mått av samarbete kommer att krävas mellan Medlemsländerna och Gemenskapen. Inom det europeiska samarbetet måste inte bara dessa frågor tillåtas ha en större betydelse, utan EU kommer även få fylla en viktig samordnande funktion. Stödandet av de insatser som görs i Medlemsländerna samt att se till att samtliga insatser passar ihop är båda uppgifter som blir av avgörande betydelse.

Med nya frågor som introduceras på den politiska arenan följer även ett ökat behov av forskning och fördjupade kunskaper. Vilka effekter har exempelvis kommersiellt tryck på konsumenters matvanor? Denna fråga likväl som andra måste studeras närmare.

Den andra delen som kommer att bli avgörande för att lösa denna problematik, blir att se till att information och utbildning når konsumenterna. Även detta är ett problem som måste attackeras på flera olika fronter. Utbildning måste ske i skolan, på arbetsplatsen och genom folkbildning. Informationsåtgärder måste vidtas av konsument organisationer, statliga myndigheter och vårdsektorn.

Vidare måste utgångspunkten vid alla åtgärder som rör utbildning och informationsspridning vara närhetsprincipen. Därigenom erkänns det faktum att det inte bara handlar om att information sprids, utan även att information också snappas upp. Att använda denna utgångspunkt medför även att åtgärderna kan spridas i samtliga samhällsskikt.

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