



## **DIET, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH - A EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

**9 FEBRUARY 2012**

**10.00 – 17.00**

**CENTRE DE CONFERENCES ALBERT BORSCHETTE (CCAB)**

**ROOM: 2C, 36, rue Froissart, B - 1040 Brussels**

### **Draft Minutes**

**Chair: Mrs Despina Spanou**

**Co-Chair: Mr. Philippe Roux**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION BY THE COMMISSION**

Mrs Despina Spanou, Chair of the Platform, opened the meeting outlining the focus on reformulation which is the key theme of this year's work for the Strategy on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related Health Issues.

##### **1.1. MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE PLATFORM' COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION WORKSHOP**

The Chair summarised the conclusions of the Workshop on Communication and Information which took place on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2012. CIRCA was confirmed as the means for internal communication. The need to enhance communication about the Platform progress was confirmed by the workshop. As next steps, the Commission services will a) look at improving the Europa website, including the development of a specific webpage that can serve as a communication tool for the members of the Platform; b) elaborate a toolkit with a brochure, a fact sheet, power point presentation and other useful material for the current and potential Platform members. It was also agreed to further explore the potential of its planning tool to share information about Platform and High Level Group meetings, but also for relevant events. Communicating Platform commitments in an unbranded manner was also agreed. Platform members who wish to communicate about the Platform content must do so without referring to a specific company or brand in order to avoid conflict of interest.

##### **1.2. STATE OF PLAY OF ACTIVE COMMITMENTS**

The Chair informed the Platform members that at the moment there are 233 commitments in the Platform, of which 134 active. Eighteen (18) new commitments have been submitted from a wide range of Platform members which compares well with the previous years. The Chair reminded that as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 new commitments can be submitted for the year 2012; at the end of 2011, there were 21 commitments foreseen to be completed and three (3) members still need to submit new actions in order to stay active in the Platform. The Commission

services have received 121 monitoring reports out of the total of 134 active commitments, and the deadline has been extended until the end of February as requested.

### 1.3. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND ARTICLES

Philippe Roux, Sanco C4, pointed out that the "Recent developments" initiative gives added value to the communication process of the Platform and invited members to continue providing material of interest and to use the findings. The main references were:

- The EU Regulation No1169/2011 on the Provision of Food Information to Consumers which will apply from 13 December 2014.
- The Council conclusions of 2 December 2011 on closing health gaps within the EU through concerted action to promote healthy lifestyles: chronic diseases and health inequalities have been put in the spotlight. In this context, food reformulation and the continuation of Platform actions were also highlighted.
- The 1st report on the EU transport and urban mobility policy, published in December 2011, which gives the opportunity to see initiatives on developing cycling and walking infrastructure.
- EFSA guidance on harmonised total diet study, published in November 2011, which is useful for the Platform work as harmonised tool.
- Two EUROSTAT publications: the 'Food Consumption Indicators' based on the results of a household budget survey and the 'Active ageing and solidarity between generations, a Statistical Portrait of the European Union in 2012'.
- Two important deliverables from the joint monitoring project of WHO Europe and the EC: an overview of the implementation of statutory and self-regulatory codes in the area of marketing foods and beverages children, and a review of food and nutrition policy and legislation development in the European Union.
- The WHO study on 'Obesity Prevalence - age standardisation in mapping overweight and obesity trends in WHO European region'.
- A series of tools, produced with the support of the EC: the health economic assessment tools (HEAT) from the Physical activity networking (PHAN) project and the guide on health benefits from non-health investments (Health Gains project).
- Research projects funded by the FP7 programme of DG RTD: two new projects on reformulation started representing the important investment from the EC in that area. The Food Labelling to Advance Better Education for Life (FLABEL) project developed a series of policy recommendations taking into account the findings on consumer understanding of labelling.
- European Food Information Council (EUFIC) review on the fruit and vegetables consumption in Europe. A disappointing finding is the decrease in the consumption of fruit and vegetables.
- EPODE report on EPODE European Network recommendations on how to implement large scale community-based interventions using the EPODE methodology: from research to practice. The EPODE method is currently being developed internationally.
- Examples of recent developments in the Member States: a report on the indicators for evaluating the Nutrition, Physical Activity, Obesity Prevention and Health Strategy (NAOS Strategy) in Spain and a study in UK underlying the worrying decrease of fruit and vegetables consumption related to social determinants.

- Recent stakeholders' activities, such as the European Heart Network (EHN) position on reformulation.
- Scientific articles: on the impact of soda tax, which shows that a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages may result in a significant cut in the health cost of diabetes; on the comparative effectiveness of weight-loss interventions in clinical practice; and on the fraction of cancer attributable to lifestyle and environmental factors in the UK.
- The Health-EU newsletter is available directly from the Public Health website and among other topics it also reviews the health campaigns in the Member States.

The European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) asked about handling the exchange of information in terms of copyright and dissemination and whether this information will be available only to Platform members, for example via CIRCA, or publicly.

IBFAN proposed that if the article has copyright issue, the Commission could share the summary.

Philippe Roux confirmed that when facing copyright issue only the link to the journal is provided to the Platform members. Platform members (e.g. European Heart Network (EHN), FoodDrinkEurope) asked if the Commission has any evaluation process (guidance, formal criteria, appraisal exercise etc) for including scientific articles.

The Chair explained that the applied selection criteria for the articles shared with Platform members is that it has to be published by recognised scientific journals, such as the Lancet or the British Medical Journal.

The Chair thanked for the constructive comments which contribute to make the initiative better.

## **2. EUROPEAN CHILDHOOD OBESITY SURVEILLANCE INITIATIVE (COSI), Dr João Breda, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Programme, Division of Non-communicable Diseases and Health Promotion WHO –Europe**

Dr João Breda introduced the initiative by recalling that it aims at the standardized measurement of overweight and obesity in primary school children (6-9 years) in the WHO European Region, including so far more than 150 thousand children in 17 EU Member States. The core elements (weight, height) are validated by the WHO. The optional elements (e.g. diet and physical activity levels) indicate some noticeable tendencies such as social inequalities, high consumption of soft drinks and a link to breast feeding. Undernourishment continues to be a problem and could perhaps also be included in the project at a later stage.

The first round of data gathering in 2007-8 has shown that the prevalence of overweight varied from 19.3% to 49.0% in boys and from 18.4% to 42.5% in girls, whereas the prevalence of obesity varied from 6.0% to 26.6% in boys and from 5.1% to 17.3% in girls. Geographically, obesity prevalence was higher in countries in the south of Europe such as Italy, Portugal, Slovenia and it is lower in the north and Scandinavian countries. Rough analysis of the 2nd round from 2009-10 clearly validates similar trends on childhood obesity prevalence.

In spite of the differences in figures with the data from the International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) the direction and the trends in prevalence of overweight or obesity are the same. Currently WHO is discussing with UK and the Nordic countries to join the COSI initiative. WHO concluded that the sustainability and the expansion to more countries and other groups such as adolescents are the future COSI challenges.

The German Federation for Food Law and food sciences (BLL) asked why data from Germany was not included. She underlined that data available in Germany suggested a slight decrease in childhood obesity.

WHO explained that they are open to negotiations with Member States and the next round of collecting data will start in October 2012.

IBFAN stressed that this work is essential but that data should also be collected on breast feeding.

WHO replied that breast feeding was not in the core elements of the COSI initiative.

The European Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (ESPGHAN) pointed out that the very first years of life are critical for prevention and it would be interesting to analyse measurements of children 1 to 3 years old.

Dr Breda responded that WHO needs to have a mandate.

### **3. NEW STAKEHOLDERS' INITIATIVES IN ALL AREAS**

#### **3.1. NU-AGE PROJECT – OVERVIEW, Dr Aurelia Santoro, Bologna University**

Dr Aurelia Santoro presented the NU-AGE project supported by the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme of the European Commission, under the Food, Agriculture and Fisheries and Biotechnology Theme.

It is a 5 years project started in May 2011 and will give insight into understanding the role of a whole diet approach for the elderly on counteracting age-related decline. The specific objectives of the project are: to create a new food pyramid for the over 65 EU population; to contribute to dietary standards, recommendations and food-based guidelines for the EU elderly; and to design industrially driven fortified foods, specifically aiming to postpone ageing decline. Research and analysis, followed by in-depth socio-economic survey on food choices and preferences of old people will be translated in industrial products (e.g. food prototypes, specific food designs). Technology transfer and dissemination is also an important part.

Two members of the Platform are involved in the NU-AGE project: EUFIC is responsible for dissemination and consumer research, and FoodDrinkEurope is responsible for reporting on the existing EU legislation and drafting policy recommendations, in addition to dealing with the economic and knowledge transfer aspects of the project.

Platform members (e.g. Family Associations – COFACE) asked about the expectations from the legislation review and the drafted policy recommendations; the relation between the NU-AGE project and EFSA's review on health claims and the adoption and implementation of the new regulation on consumer information.

FoodDrinkEurope replied that the objective for the 1st year of the project is to present the state of play of EU legislation, e.g. on food information, health claims etc. The NU-AGE project is looking at the potential establishment of a food pyramid for the elderly. Any claim will have to comply with the Health claims regulation.

Portugal underlined that the elderly are a vulnerable group and stated that food for the elderly will become an important market requiring high ethical approach.

The Federation of the European Play Industry (FEPI) asked whether the project deliberately or accidentally focused only on nutrition, especially considering that elderly people do need to be physically active in order to stay healthy.

Dr Santoro replied that the importance of physical activity is indeed recognised but the complexity of the project does not allow including training activities as well. However, physical activity requirements will be included in the general advice. She also explained that the project is highly demanding in terms of subject compliance.

EHN asked whether there is a real need to have a specific food pyramid for the 65+ and why general nutrition recommendations cannot be used instead, taking also into account that this growing population group is not homogenous. EHN wondered how the specific objectives stemmed from the overall objectives and whether the project will re-examine the specific objectives at a later more-advanced stage of the research. He also stated that it is difficult to create an EU diet pyramid for the elderly.

Dr Santoro explained that it is important to have specific recommendations for the elderly because their nutrition is lacking some important micronutrients, in order to counteract body decline due to ageing. The requirement of specific nutrients is the same in a common diet approach for the 65+ and the diet can be adapted in each country.

IBFAN mentioned that the reform of PARNuts was supposed to be reducing the number of foods targeted at specific groups and wondered if this project is going to undermine this sensible move. IBFAN expressed the concern of developing a market for the ageing population and asked whether the industry intends to ask for recognition of health claims on food targeting the over 65 citizens. IBFAN also stated that an independent analysis is needed excluding the industry.

FoodDrinkEurope replied that this is not their intention.

The EuroHealthNet pointed out that in order to have good quality findings the research part of the project should take into consideration the effects of the subjects' lifestyle and of the possible medication intake.

Dr Santoro explained that they will monitor physical activity, cognitive and health status, and in-depth molecular analysis such as genetics, epigenetic and other molecular functions. Subjects with specific medical conditions or taking specific medication have been excluded in compliance with the pre-determined exclusion criteria of the study.

EUFIC explained that when an organisation answers a call from the DG RTD FP, the specific proposal should agree with the priorities set out by the call for proposals. Based on that if physical activity had been a more prominent part of the project, it would have been rejected. Regarding health claims, EUFIC remarked that the project aims to understand what attitude the elderly have towards products with health claims. EUFIC emphasised that it is not about defining a pyramid but rather about communicating top level advice to the elderly for their diet needs.

Philippe Roux pointed out that research and the impact of regulation are separate processes. He reminded that this is a project selected by DG RTD after having been evaluated by independent researchers. He also suggested to Dr Santoro to take back to her fellow researchers the concern of Platform members about the issue of an EU-wide food pyramid, as well as the concern about the link between the overall objectives and the operational objectives of the project.

#### **4. COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES, Mrs Wanda Betelmans, Project leader, Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, Centre for Prevention and Health Services Research**

Mrs Betelmans gave an overview of the survey on EU Community-Based Initiatives (CBIs) to reduce childhood obesity which was commissioned by DG SANCO in 2010 and carried out with the collaboration of WHO Europe. The survey includes CBIs which have been implemented between 2005 and 2011 in the 27 EU Member States as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, had duration of at least 1 year, had a process evaluation, involved obesity, physical activity and/or nutrition in the health objectives; and targeted children. Additional criteria were formulated based on the WHO definition for CBIs

in order to assess the involvement of the target population at local level and the integrated and intersectoral collaboration.

Approximately 260 potential eligible projects have been identified; 88 out of these responded to the questionnaire; 83 CBIs were finally included in the report. It was roughly estimated that in that time period the total amount of EU CBIs may be above 500 and in several countries – France, Hungary, Iceland, Spain and Sweden - they targeted approximately 5% of the youth population aged up to 18. Schools appeared to be the main setting for action in the majority of the cases, closely followed by the neighbourhood at a local level.

The report provides practical experiences, activities and instruments used within the CBIs. A summary of policy recommendations on prioritizing childhood obesity in national policies has been developed. The report will be available in April 2012.

EUFIC asked if and how the Commission will develop the proposed database.

Philippe Roux replied that the development of a new data base is not necessary as this tool exists already with the NOPA database, which is a result of the collaboration between EC and WHO. He also underlined that the report itself is a tool giving insights for improvements and more Member States participation.

WHO confirmed their involvement during the elaboration of this report and their intention to include good CBIs practices in the NOPA database.

## **5. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 28-29 NOVEMBER & PLATFORM DATABASE**

The co-Chair asked if the participants had any comments on the minutes of the Platform meeting of 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and called on to send them written, if any.

IBFAN had comments regarding its position on the EU Pledge and the spelling of the IBFAN acronym. Minutes revised accordingly were adopted.

Regarding the commitments which are not included in the database, the Commission services will circulate a detailed list to be verified by the members and will proceed with the necessary adaptation of the questionnaire that will have to be filled in by the action leaders before reintegration in the data base.

## **6. APPLICATION REPORT ON AVMSD, Mrs Anne Deltour, DG INFSO, Audiovisual and Media Policies Unit**

Mrs. Anne Deltour recalled that Article 33 of the Directive foresees a reporting obligation of the implementation in the Member States. The report will also consider the impact of the developments in the field of audiovisual media services, in particular in the light of recent technological developments, the competitiveness of the sector and levels of media literacy in all Member States. The report will also consider the issue of television advertising accompanying or included in children's programmes, and in particular whether the quantitative and qualitative rules contained in this Directive have afforded the level of protection required. The reference period of the report is 2009 - part of 2011 and it will be delivered in spring 2012. The Commission shall also adopt a policy paper on Connected TV at the end of 2012.

IBFAN stated that sponsorship and product placement may affect the message of a whole programme and it is difficult to handle, e.g. the messages for healthy eating or breast feeding can be really distorting.

Mrs. Deltour replied that product placement must not affect editorial independence. The undue prominence and the editorial independence are the rules to assess the legitimacy of product placement. Distorted health messages are not really commercial messages. The Directive is a minimum base of harmonization of commercial aspects and the freedom of expression is ensured.

The Chair concluded that the report may be ready to be presented during the next Platform meeting in May.

## **7. ACTIVE COMMITMENTS IN THE FIELD OF FOOD REFORMULATION**

### **7.1. INTRODUCTION**

The Chair highlighted that food reformulation is a priority area of work in 2012 for the Platform and the High Level Group. Based on information from 2012, a total of 26 commitments are reported under "Composition of foods (reformulation), availability of healthy food options, portion sizes"; of these 17 are active and 4 are new actions from 2011.

Platform members who have activities on reformulation are FoodDrinkEurope, FERCO, EMRA, EUROCOOP and EUROCOMMERCE. The Chair highlighted the good range of commitments and stakeholders. She also called on members Platform to improve the reporting and monitoring aspects of the reformulation commitments.

### **7.2. OVERVIEW OF COMMITMENTS IN THE FIELD OF FOOD REFORMULATION Dr Cristina Vladu, IBF International Consulting Monitoring Team**

Dr Cristina Vladu gave an overview of 2005-2010 commitments in the field of Food Reformulation:

- 23 reformulation commitments have been submitted of which 9 were still active in 2010;
- 5 active commitments have been assessed having important reformulation activities, although they have self reported them as other activity type;
- The majority was implemented mainly at a European level. A wide variety of fields of intervention was identified: 5 commitments on salt, 5 on sugar, 5 on fat, 4 on saturated fat, 1 on trans-fat, 4 on portion size, and 3 on innovative alternatives. Some examples of reformulation commitments were presented.
- There is a high diversity in the reporting format which leads to difficulty in measuring outputs and outcomes or making comparisons from one year to the other. The same variability is also found in terms of reporting the funds allocated; only a few commitments have explicitly mentioned the funds spent; the overall figure that was reported as spent summed up to 15.589.000 EUR.

The Chair asked for clarifications on the budget.

Dr Vladu replied that the amount mentioned is based on the data from a few commitments.

The Chair asked that this is made clearer in the presentation.

EFA asked how many commitments on reformulation are active in 2012.

The Chair replied that 17 are still active.

IBFAN reminded the need to have presentations sent 2 weeks prior to the Platform meetings; IBFAN also highlighted the need to be able to present outside the Platform comparative

figures resulting from the Platform's activity. It also commented that there is a "need for regular and steady commitments" for longer periods of time (rather than change priority from one year to the next).

The Chair agreed on the need to circulate the presentations 2 weeks in advance. She also responded that it would be of great help to have standardized data and procedures to be able to assess the impact and to compare and set tendencies. This is an issue where WHO and Member States are working on at the moment.

FoodDrinkEurope underlined that companies are also struggling with the standardizing and monitoring aspects due to different ways of collecting data and reporting. For the time being no standardized data for yearly comparisons are available. A more global picture will be in 2013 as FoodDrinkEurope started a process of standardization within their companies.

### 7.3. PLATFORM COMMITMENTS

#### **7.3.1. GERMANY'S TRANS FAT REFORMULATION PROJECT, Mrs Mrohs, Bund für Lebensmittelrecht & Lebensmittelkunde E.V.- German Federation for food law and food sciences (BLL)**

Mrs Mrohs underlined that Germany has succeeded in reducing trans-fat acids (TFA) from partly hydrogenated fat substantially in many products during the last 20 years, e.g. in frying fats and spreadable plant fats, particularly with regard to margarines, potato products and bakery products; but that there are still problems related to young people consuming the so called 'non-ruminant' TFAs.

In 2010 the Federal Ministry of Nutrition, Agriculture and Consumer Protection called for action in order to face the problem in young people. The Working Group identified the possibilities for substitution of partially hydrogenated fats in almost all product groups and come up with principle guidelines; the 'TFA-Initiative Document', produced at the end of 2011, gives practical recommendations to the industry how to further reduce non-ruminant (industrial) TFA in food.

Mrs Mrohs highlighted that this is a joint initiative between the government and the industry sector, entailing three main documents: a joint Paper containing a short overview, the purpose of the project and recommendations, BLL organizations Framework Guidelines and Products Guidelines. The hot topics which emerged during the preparation of these documents were related to the decision of preparing a self-commitment or a real Declaration to the setting of the 2% reduction target in several but not all product guidelines and to the optional labelling of TFAs. Next steps for 2012 will be the final approval of the document, the publication, the distribution and activities to increase awareness.

The Chair asked if the 2% target is general and if it is foreseen for the end of 2012.

Mrs Mrohs replied that it is a target that industries should try to achieve in the future with no specific deadline.

Portugal asked which drivers helped the rapid development of the project.

Mrs Mrohs answered that this was possible due to the willingness of all parties involved.

FoodDrinkEurope asked if the 2% target was considered in reduction of total fat.

This was confirmed by Mrs Mrohs.

BEUC asked for details on the timeframe.

Mrs Mrohs responded that the formal adoption is foreseen in the coming 6-8 weeks while no timeframe has been set for companies. The purpose of the guidelines is to raise awareness, to

inform the companies, to recommend and then to monitor their behaviour, but it is up to companies to decide if, how and when will reach the target. Mrs. Mors added that the process will be monitored.

EHN asked if there is a recommendation about fat replacement.

Mrs. Mrohs said that the recommendation is based on what is industrially achieved and available.

EUFIC asked about the main target of products of this initiative.

Mrs. Mrohs replied that the bakery products are the main target.

### **7.3.2. FOODDRINKEUROPE POSITION ON PORTION SIZES, Mrs Marta Baffigo FoodDrinkEurope Scientific and Regulatory Affairs**

Mrs Marta Baffigo presented FoodDrinkEurope position and achievements on portion sizes. The EU legislation has provisions to provide information also on a portion basis; this was set to help consumers in comparing different products and understanding the nutritional value of the amount of food/drink they actually consume. Also the need for portion based information became a necessity especially when the Scheme of providing information on GDAs was introduced. Sector-wide portion sizes have been established by various sectors associations (cereals, soups, confectionary, meat products, snacks, ice cream, margarine, pasta and soft drinks). An Expert Group on Portions was created in early 2010 to establish Guiding Principles and to assess whether the sector rational of portion sizes are consistent with the Guiding Principles.

General essential principles were established regarding the communication of a portion e.g.: to be meaningful and easy understandable, representative for EU-wide population, appropriate, not misleading or related to consumption habits. Another aspect was regarding how information should be provided e.g. the package should indicate how many portions it contains, portion should be defined by weight or with clear pictures, the use of visual scales. Three main types of products (single-portion, multi-portion with recognisable portion units and other multi-portion packs) were defined.

The common guidelines have been shared within the companies of FoodDrinkEurope.

The Chair asked if there is any study of consumer understanding of portion sizes.

The answer was that EUFIC had carried out a study. EUFIC intervened underlying that consumer research project has been done a year ago giving insights on understanding of portion size.

EHN suggested that the portions are respecting what people eat but they are not giving information on what people should eat.

FoodDrinkEurope replied that there are obviously differences between products and sectors, but there is an effort to balance what people eat and what they should eat. She added that a huge effort has done by FDE to gather information about EU consumption data.

EUFIC reminded that the regulation requires the information on energy in the Front of Pack (FoP) to be in kJ, and no formal requirement exists for kcal. EUFIC noticed the efforts has been done in the past to educate consumers on Kcal and added that the consumers will be confused with the various expressions given in the FoP.

FoodDrinkEurope agreed with this comment. FoodDrinkEurope is working on guidelines for the food industry on unclear issues of the regulation which can share with the EC.

The Chair stressed that the regulation is balanced and agreed on the need to inform people on how energy information is presented on the product packages.

### **7.3.3. PRODUCT REFORMULATION AND INNOVATION – THE EXAMPLE OF NESTLE Mrs Christina Drotz-Jonasson, Nestle Corporate Public Affairs**

Mrs Drotz-Jonasson gave an overview of Nestlé's 'Product Innovation and Renovation'. Reformulation is a key action and main responsibility of the industry to apply it. Nestle system on key products includes a taste assessment on consumer preferences and a nutritional assessment. The objectives of Nestle nutritional profiling system are the mapping of nutritional value of all Nestle products and the improvement in the ability to deliver healthy and tasty choices to consumers.

Mrs Drotz-Jonasson continued presenting the plan of salt reduction that Nestle has been implementing since 2003 and she underlined the importance of government support in this type of intervention. She also showed some examples of innovative activities (Maggi to promote balanced cooking, the breakfast cereals example and TFAs removal).

A new commitment on salt reduction will start in 2012 which foresees a further reduction of sodium levels by an average of 10% in products. All these efforts contribute not only to obesity efforts but also to malnutrition.

The Chair welcomed the new commitment.

EFHA asked for market share information and studies on impact on sales.

Mrs Drotz-Jonasson responded that some data exist but for the moment this is a step by step approach and data have to be long-term based.

COFACE asked if reporting will be in percentages or in tonnage and highlighted the benefits of percentages. COFACE also asked if the same strategy of the reformulation process is applied across Member States or is differentiated amongst them and cited an EU hearing asking for existing differentiation between countries.

Nestle answered that reporting is done in tonnage. Reformulation is a huge process which requires high resources from the industry and is usually done on a large scale markets; Nestle is aware of the debate and confirmed that the reformulation planning is done across countries but there are specific differentiations in the application to each country.

EUFIC asked if they never experienced specific problems in reformulation with any specific product or country.

Nestle replied that difficulties may arise especially for traditional products but there is the possibility of providing alternatives. She also underlined that taste can vary over time and this is something that should be taken into consideration.

IBFAN criticized Nestle for pushing consumers with flavours ("educating their palate") and then trying to provide healthier products. IBFAN also underlined the need for a new food culture within industries. IBFAN stated that Nestle is claiming to use the WHO Guidelines whereas in practice it does not.

### **7.3.4. MCCAIN FOODS EUROPE. CREATING GOOD FOOD, Mr Bartlett Corporate Affairs Director, Mc Cain UK and Mr. Gonde, Regulatory and Nutrition Manager, Mc Cain Continental Europe**

The speakers presented McCain Nutritional Policy Goals, which look at: improving and developing products with relevant nutritional properties, promoting potato consumption by

informing consumers, promoting well balanced diets and healthy lifestyles, addressing the health and nutrition topics. To achieve these, in the past years many commitments have been taken such as the launch of a non pre-fried line, the reduction of saturated fat by 40%, the launch of a new potato with total fat decreased by 50% and the respect of the sodium limit set by the European Food Industry Guidelines.

The speakers also presented some of their healthy innovative products designed in reflection of consumers demand and showed how information to consumer is provided on their product packs. Other Mc Cain activities are communication and educational ones on healthier nutritional behaviours. Mc Cain will table a new commitment under the umbrella of FoodDrinkEurope.

The Chair welcomed the new commitment.

#### **7.4. MEMBER STATES, FOOD REFORMULATION AND FOOD TAXES**

The Chair informed the Platform that the High Level Group (HLG) agreed that the European Commission would work towards proposing an annex to the common framework for the reduction of selected nutrients to address saturated fat including possible benchmarks for reduction at the next meeting of 14 June 2012.

Mrs. Stephanie Bodenbach, DG SANCO/E4, added that on 2nd February 2012 the HLG decided to work with priority on benchmarks for saturated fat and dairy and meat products. On saturated fat the aim is a reduction by 5 % over the next 4 years and a further 5% reduction later. From the other nutrients, Member States suggested that specific objectives could be for example to actively promote the low fat option for dairy products (milk, fermented milk) coupled with enhanced availability of these products. She also reminded that some Member States have already chosen to focus on certain food groups.

The Chair also informed the Platform members about the discussion of the HLG on national food and beverages taxation initiatives. Food taxes are currently not subject to specific harmonized EU legislative provisions. The discussion demonstrated the complexity involved in monitoring the impact of food tax measures on health. Member States also raised issues such as the impact of such measures on cross-border trade as well as the relevance of the quality of food products. Some Member States also mentioned that taxation measures should be counter-balanced either by reduced taxes on healthier food groups like fruits and vegetables or by returning investment in prevention (e.g. through social marketing). The discussion revealed clearly that taxation could not be considered sufficient on its own to counter overweight and obesity trends and that it could only be part of a more global approach and range of measures. The HLG will follow national developments in particular in Member States, such as Ireland, that intend to carry out health impact assessments. The main focus for future exchanges will be on the possible monitoring tools and the outcomes of these measures in the Member States.

Philippe Roux pointed out that the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union is the base for action regarding taxes at EU level. The Commission can only act to harmonise taxation when there is clearly interference within the internal market. Member States are obliged, under EU excise law, to apply excise duties to energy products and electricity, alcohol and alcoholic beverages and tobacco products. Member States may apply, next to VAT, any other taxes to goods that cannot be characterized as turnover taxes. The Commission has received complaints related to the adopted taxes on foodstuffs and they are being investigated.

WFA asked whether the complaints received by the Commission fall under the EU existing regulation, and whether the 5% reduction of saturated fat could be explained in terms of what it applies to.

The Chair explained that the complaints are being investigated by the relevant Commission services dealing with taxation and as the procedure is ongoing, no information can be disclosed at the moment. Regarding the benchmark on saturated fat, she repeated that it will be precisely defined in the next HLG meeting. The Chair stressed again that this work on saturated fat does not replace the common framework on selected nutrients; this agreement will be annexed in the framework as the Commission continues to work on a global framework.

UNESDA commented on the adoption of the soda tax in France pointing out that self regulation on responsible advertising to children has already provided tangible effects on reducing the consumption of soft drinks in children under 12, according to data from CREDOC (Centre de Recherche pour l' Etude et l'Observation des Conditions de Vie).

EUFIC pointed out that it seems a state can tax even a nutrient that has no caloric value and no relation to obesity, such as caffeine or sweeteners.

FoodDrinkEurope remarked that in the case of Hungary taxing only industry products but not small local artisans creates a conflict between local and imported products.

The Chair reminded that Member States have freedom on taxation. With regards to obesity, the Commission is asking from the Member States to demonstrate the impact on public health. The effect of food taxation on cross-border trade has been discussed in the High Level Group and is being taken into consideration.

### **Conclusion of the plenary meeting**

- The Interim salt report foreseen by the Council conclusions on salt reduction will be circulated for comments and contributions by this summer.
- The next Platform meeting will take place on 24 May 2012 and will be devoted to "Consumer Information, Including Labelling".
- The provisional dates for the remaining meetings in 2012 are 20 September and again, a joint meeting foreseen together with the High Level Group on 14 November 2012.