



**DIET, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH -
A EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR ACTION
28 FEBRUARY 2013
10.00 – 17.00**

CHAIR: Mr John Ryan

DRAFT MINUTES

1. INTRODUCTION BY THE COMMISSION

Mr John Ryan opened the meeting by informing the participants that the session was dedicated to research and reformulation. The Platform plenary adopted the minutes from the last meeting.

Ms Paola Testori Coggi, Director-General, informed the Platform stakeholders that Mrs Despina Spanou having been appointed Director of Consumer Affairs in DG Sanco, Ms Testori Coggi asked Mr John Ryan, acting Director of the Public Health Directorate, to chair the future meetings of the Platform and of the High Level Group, as well as of the Alcohol Forum. She added that the next Platform/High Level Group meeting of 20 June will be a milestone in the process of focussing priorities for action in the coming years to achieve the goal of halting overweight and obesity among the EU population. She reminded that Sanco regulatory work should continue to be combined with voluntary work. This is even more crucial in a crisis period where the pressure is high on prevention expenditures. The Platform should reinforce actions in key fields such as food reformulation and responsible advertising. She also referred to the high level of media attention on the horse meat fraud underlining that the Commission and Member States have rapidly reacted and that numerous tests are being implemented in the Member States.

2. NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR RESEARCH?

Ms Isabelle de Froidmont-Goertz (European Commission) presented the proposal for Horizon 2020, with a 70 billion euro EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020). The objective of the programme is to respond to the economic crisis, to invest in future jobs, in smart and sustainable growth and to improve the health of the EU population. With the new proposal, more research money will be allocated to small and medium sized enterprises. Ms de Froidmont-Goertz informed that the current 7th EU Research Framework Programme (FP7) represents 53 billion € for 7 years (2007-2013) of

which 1935 million € are allocated for the theme “Food, Agriculture and Fisheries and Biotechnology”. Several on-going projects are aimed to promote a more sustainable agriculture and forestry and to ensure a sustainable and competitive agri-food sector for a safe and healthy diet. For tomorrow’s healthy society, the Commission will continue to support the implementation of the Horizon 2020 and to identify future research and innovation priorities.

After the presentation the Chair opened the floor for questions.

FoodDrinkEurope underlined the importance of research in the field of food and health and mentioned that it could be relevant to discuss research needs in the Platform.

European Food Information Council underlined the difficulty of having access to information – also after a project has ended.

International Baby Food Action Network expressed concern regarding research projects that focussed on innovative products which in the field of infant and young child feeding can be problematic since the way these products are promoted can undermine breastfeeding and unprocessed family foods. IBFAN also expressed concern that partnership with an industry is encouraged and asked if this is still the case.

The Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union wondered whether there are funds for projects concerning fresh food and vegetables.

Ms de Froidmont-Goertz replied that all results must be published and reviewed and an event should be organised to disseminate the results of a project at its end. Furthermore, all the projects can be found in the Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS). Regarding IBFAN’s concerns, it is necessary to involve food industry. Research in raw material such as fruit and vegetables is not covered in the food programme, which was presented. However, it is covered under the agricultural theme where there are research projects on natural biological foods. Stakeholders can always send proposals for research topics to local organiser or relevant Member State authorities.

The Chair invited DG Research to the next meeting to present new research projects.

2.1. Presentation of the JPI's first Pilot action, DEDIPAC (determinants of Diet and Physical Activity Choice)

Dr Friederike Bathe, Project Funding Agency in the German Aerospace Center, presented the first joint action under the Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) “A Healthy Diet for A Healthy Life (HDHL)”: DEDIPAC: the Knowledge Hub on the DEterminants of DIet and Physical ACTivity. Within this initiative, a European trans-disciplinary network of selected research groups and scientists from DEDIPAC partners conduct joint activities with the objective to better understand how individual, social and environmental determinants influence food and physical activity choices. Research groups and scientists from different disciplines will be brought together to collaborate, create common databases, joint

monitoring systems and procedures and to develop new strategies to affect critical determinants by taking a holistic approach. 160 scientists were nominated as hub members and the first DEDIPAC networking meeting is foreseen on March 7-8 2013 in Berlin, which will be the start of the preparation of a joint programme proposal. In the final step, this joint proposal will be evaluated by an international evaluation panel. In case the proposal is recommended for funding, the negotiations with the national funding organisations are foreseen in August 2013. Each Member State must finance the participation of their representative.

After the presentation the Chair opened the floor for questions.

International Baby Food Action Network asked whether Member States still can be included in the programme.

European Cyclists' Federation asked about the future actions in the field of physical activity.

Dr Bathe replied that it is still open to join the JPI and Member States must allocate the funding. She also referred to the research on the determinants of physical activities, to better understand why people move or not.

2.2. Presentation of the research projects PLEASURE and PERFORMANCE

Professor Alain Le Bail, ONIRIS, Nantes-Atlantic National College of Food Science and Engineering and Veterinary Medicine presented the projects PLEASURE and PERFORMANCE in the area of reformulation. PLEASURE (novel Processing approaches for the development of food products Low in fAt, Salt and sUgar Reduced; 2012-2014) is the first European research project addressing the challenges involved with producing food low in fat, salt and sugar from the processing side. The project focused on the development of processes and technologies for the production of bakery, meat, and cheese products and fruit and vegetables as well as ready-to-eat meals (pizzas and puffing pastry). Some preliminary results from the project:

- 20 % fat reduction in puff pastry products,
- 25 % salt reduction in pizza dough,
- 30 % salt reduction in cooked meat products,
- 1.5 % reduction in mayonnaise and carbonara sauce.

The project PERFORMANCE (Development of PERsonalised Food using Rapid Manufacturing for the Nutrition of elderly ConsumERs; 2012-2015) aims at improving the quality of life of the elderly by offering them a completely new and personalized nutritional concept capable of enhancing their health status and social life. The main innovation consists in personalised smooth food industrially manufactured.

After the presentation the Chair opened the floor for questions.

The European Public Health Alliance asked which partners are involved in the two projects as well as what evidence is behind the assumption that elderly people will benefit more from specialized food.

European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians mentioned the difficulties with swallowing following a stroke and asked whether vitamins were put into this food?

International Baby Food Action Network repeated concerns about the promotion of ultra-processed high tech foods, especially for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, and how this can undermine confidence in healthier unprocessed foods.

Professor Le Bail replied that the projects are driven by the needs of the industry, and that several SMEs are involved. Since he is only project manager for the Pleasure project, the Chair forwarded the questions concerning PERFORMANCE to the project manager.

Mr **Mathias Kück**, the Project Manager of PERFORMANCE, has sent the following reply:

Both projects are industrially driven and the majority of partners are SME. When people are getting older, age-related diseases (Diabetes Type 2, Alzheimer, loss of physical capabilities) grow and it results in a loss of sensorial capabilities (e.g. taste and smelling), thus leading to loosing appetite and to development of swallowing and mastication problems. Furthermore, the project will automatize the addition of nutrients such as vitamins according to the personal nutritional data for each individual resident. For fat and sugar reduction, the challenge in reducing them mainly concerns convenience products (ready-to eat, processed food) as these components are often used as low cost additive or as technical aid. In order to stay competitive, the food industry cannot simply replace them by other additives; therefore novel technological solutions are required.

2.3. Presentation of:

- **FULL4HEALTH** - “Mechanism of hunger and satiety”
- **NeuroFAST** - ‘The Integrated Neurobiology of Food Intake, Addiction and Stress’
- **SATIN** – ‘Satiety Innovation’

Professor Julian Mercer from the University of Aberdeen presented the three research projects with focus on satiety and developing food products that result in feeling full for a longer period of time:

Full4Health is investigating mechanisms of hunger, satiety and feeding behaviour, and how these change throughout the life course.

NeuroFAST involves both clinical and experimental expertise of thirteen partners across Europe aiming to investigate the common neurobiology involved in eating behaviour, addiction and stress, with particular focus on the evidence base on ‘food addiction’.

SATIN aims to develop new food products using the latest processing innovation techniques. Exploiting better understanding of the biological processes in the stomach and the brain that underpin what makes us feel “full”, the project will evaluate whether this approach is a viable weight management tool.

After the presentation the Chair opened the floor for questions.

European Health and Fitness Association asked whether people have fixed preferences.

Professor Mercer replied that it is possible to influence the preferences and mentioned the example of sugar as a reward. He also pointed out the excess of sugar and fat in the current food environment.

2.4. Presentation of European Association for the Study of Obesity’s recent activities

Ms Dana Müllerová presented the recent activities of the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO). As leading European scientific and practice-based professional membership association in obesity research field, EASO organised in cooperation with the University of Copenhagen, in January 2013 a workshop on Social Sciences and Humanities. The workshop aimed at helping the development of research priorities in this field. An Executive Summary of the workshop was published on 26 February 2013 and will be completed by extended report at the end of March 2013.

3. ACTIVE COMMITMENTS IN THE FIELD OF REFORMULATION - Composition of foods, availability of healthy food options, portion sizes

3.1. Overview of commitments in the field of reformulation, by IBF International Consulting

Mr John Griffiths, IBF International Consulting, presented data on reformulation commitments from 2008 onwards. The stakeholders have undertaken a total of 29 commitments related to "reformulation" of which 19 are still on-going in 2013. It is mostly FoodDrinkEurope members who are active in this field, having 11 active commitments, EMRA have 2, and CopaCogeca, CPME, EuroCommerce, EuroCoop, EVA and FERCO having 1 active commitment each in the field of reformulation.

Several discussion points were raised by Mr Griffiths:

- The number of reformulation commitments has not maintained the same level of increase. Why?

The feedback from the Platform stakeholders was:

- Reformulation commitments (and all commitments) should be integrated with the activities of the High Level Group, especially on the issue of saturated fats and calories.
- There are limits to reformulation – platform members must expand into innovation.
- The regulatory framework around reformulation can be restrictive to companies.

- What opportunities are there for further reformulation initiatives and what obstacles might be faced?

The feedback from the Platform stakeholders was:

- Creating a reformulated product that does not rely on intense sugars, especially in children's food.
- Innovation – many new products are possible.
- Enhance omega 6 in food.

After the presentation the Chair opened the floor for questions.

3.2. Platform Commitments in the field of reformulation

Three new actions in the field of reformulation were submitted during 2012 by Danone Research, Nestlé, and Barilla.

Dr Martine Alles, Director Developmental Physiology & Nutrition, Danone Research, presented the Danone Baby Nutrition's new commitment; the objective is to better understand dietary habits and nutrient imbalances of young children with the aim of optimising Danone Baby products and of adapting communication to parents. To support this commitment, dietary surveys are underway in 7 European countries. In conducting these surveys Danone always works with local nutritional authorities. Martine Alles also presented the achievements made in another reformulation commitment. Increasing vegetable intake and decreasing sugar intake in products for infants and young children are important targets in this commitment. Danone is aiming at reducing sugar by 20% in 2015 in its Baby products, such as infant cereals and fruit jars. Vegetable content is increased in savoury meals. These improvements are thought to contribute to the establishment of healthy eating habits.

After the presentation the Chair opened the floor for questions.

European Public Health Alliance asked about the legal standards used in the reformulation of products as well as the level of consumer acceptance on the reformulated products.

International Baby Food Action Network wondered why Danone offers products from four months onwards when breastfeeding is recommended for the first six months. Furthermore, IBFAN mentioned the conflict of interest for a company such as Danone to communicate health messages to parents and finally asked what kind of reporting on reformulation progress Danone is doing.

Dr Alles answered that the products are adapted to the EU Regulation on baby foods. The product changes matter more to parents than to the infants and there is a need to make parents understand that low sugar is better. She explained that Danone is not competing with breast milk. The Danone messages to parents concerns only advice on appropriate portion sizes. The commitment is being monitored, however, the first step is to reformulate products and then to communicate findings to a wider audience; submitting a paper to a peer review journal would be an acceptable way forward.

3.3. Other initiatives in the field of reformulation

3.3.1. *Which's* - assessment of food company actions to make healthier choices easier, presentation by Sue Davies, Chief Policy Adviser, *Which* (UK consumer organisation)

Ms Sue Davies, the UK Consumer Council *Which?*, presented their Consumer Report "A taste for change? Food companies assessed for action to enable healthier choices." Their findings are focusing on key areas linked to reformulation, labelling and marketing. The report assesses how far the leading companies have progressed in delivering positive changes for consumers and sets out a series of recommendations to government and industry to ensure that the action taken is more comprehensive. Pledges have been developed as part of the Responsibility Deal for England, for salt reduction, trans fat removal, calorie reduction, out of home calorie labelling as well as the increase of fruit and vegetable consumption. The report concluded that the pace of change needed to increase – including more specific pledges, clearer guidance and targets from government and sanctions for failure to take action. *Which?* recommended also that companies build specific health targets into their business plans, with clear monitoring and reporting mechanisms, take more action on traffic light labelling, reformulation and to further strengthened policies on marketing of foods to children.

After the presentation, the Chair opened the floor for questions.

FoodDrinkEurope wondered how *Which* is positively working with companies. Ms Davies specified that they do it in a range of ways: through the *Which* magazine, campaign work, by meeting companies and signing up pledges. *Which* is also a member of the Responsibility Deal High Level Steering Group.

3.3.2. Reformulation commitments for specific product sectors - Dutch Food industry and retail organisations, presentation by Christine Grit, the Dutch Food Industry Organisation(FNLI)

Ms Christine Grit, FNLI presented the National Action by The Dutch Food Retail Association (CBL) and the FNLI. The Covenant Healthy Weight with the aim to turn trend of rising overweight and obesity rates and the National Network on reformulation by nutritionally improving specific products. 27 organisations (including the food industry and catering organisations) are involved in the Covenant and the activities focus portion sizes through companies' commitments and expert working groups. Within the Network focus lies on reformulation in which FNLI and CBL have joint projects on behalf of their Industry/retail members. Their project on salt reduction in processed vegetables and pulses has resulted in a reduction of salt across the market.

After the presentation the Chair opened the floor for questions and asked regarding the project timetable; whether there are targets set for the project and what sort of evaluation there will be of the results?

European Heart Network wanted to know about the findings on portion sizes and whether the companies will make a claim on the products that the salt content is reduced?

Ms Grit answered that the project was expected to run until 2015; however, with regards to salt reduction in processed vegetables, all manufacturers have reduced salt content within 1.5 years from the start of the project. Individual goals for each group of products were created. Evaluation is difficult; especially as there is more than one sector involved. Data from a governmental organization was used to compare improvements in the content of food in 2011 and in 2012.

The Chair stated that we may come back on this at a later stage.

4. REFORMULATION FRAMEWORKS – PROGRESS IN THE MEMBER STATES

Ms Stephanie Bodenbach (European Commission) presented the preliminary findings on existing or planned initiatives on saturated fat by the Members of the High Level Group. These findings were based on a survey carried out following the endorsement of the common approach to reduce saturated fat in the EU, in the Annex to the Framework on Selected Nutrients. The study allowed determining that:

- a majority of Member States have national recommendations on saturated fat and most of the reported initiatives were part of a broader national program;
- many national initiatives also involve work on total fat, fat quality and trans fat;
- the overall reduction benchmarks for saturated fat of 5% within 4 years, and an additional 5% until 2020, were seen by somewhat more than half of the responding countries as a reduction of the population intake levels of saturated fat while the other countries who responded to the question view those levels as reduction benchmarks for product categories;
- reformulation by industry was considered as the most important elements of the national initiative, closely followed by as raising consumer awareness on saturated fat, collection of data and monitoring and evaluation of actions and reformulation activities.

After the presentation the Chair opened the floor for questions.

Standing Committee of European Doctors highlighted that Member States have a cross ministry approach and wondered to what extent these policies are integrated with agriculture and employment policies?

Ms Bodenbach answered that a few Member States have developed plans in cooperation with other ministries. Often there is one ministry that leads the reformulation with the involvement of others.

5. NEW STAKEHOLDERS' INITIATIVES IN ALL AREAS

5.1. Nutri-medias: a permanent education tool for trainers and parents, by Mr Martin Schmalzried, Policy Officer, Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE)

Mr Martin Schmalzried, COFACE, presented the results of their commitment; Nutri-Medias, a media literacy tool focused on nutrition targeting trainers of family organisations and parents. It develops awareness raising and training activities on the existing links between nutrition and the media through event/workshop. This tool consists partly in the elaboration of a “package”, where a USB key with information is distributed to trainers. Nutri-Medias also aim especially to foster reflection of participants. COFACE held a launching event for French family organisations in Paris on the 26th of October 2012. The outcomes are already positives and for the future, COFACE intends to monitor the spread and use of the current tool by keeping it up to date, and plans to adapt and translate the tool into other languages as well as developing a tool for children on the same topic.

After the presentation the Chair opened the floor for questions.

FoodDrinkEurope wondered how the tool encourages the reporting of inappropriate messages on children’s TV and wondered about the synchronicity of the tool with the Media Smart programme.

Mr Schmalzried answered that in France, the tool encourages parents to report inappropriate messages to the Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel; the body that covers all digital media. Furthermore, the Media Smart programme inspired to the development of the Nutri-Media tool, but Nutri-Medias is aimed at parents whereas the Media Smart programme is designed for use by children.

Mr Philippe Roux added that there are interesting developments in this commitment and that further discussion can be held at the next meeting.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Liam Durack (European Commission) presented the state of play on Platform commitments and pointed out that for the first time, the number of non-active commitments exceeds the number of active commitments. Furthermore, by April 2013, there will be a new submission form.

Mr Philippe Roux reminded the Stakeholders that a main criterion of being a member of the Platform is having an active commitment and currently two members have none. He emphasized that having no active commitments will result in suspension of membership. Members were asked to consider tabling new commitments or extending existing commitments.

At the request of **International Baby Food Action Network**, this was followed by a discussion on the Lancet article, *Profits and pandemics: prevention of harmful effects of*

*tobacco, alcohol, and ultra-processed food and drink industries*¹. The Chair stated that self-regulation needs to be monitored and assessed, which is relevant to the Platform.

International Baby Food Action Network made several comments about the article as it relates to nature of Platforms and their dynamics. While the EU Platform is not a policy setting body, it is nevertheless a dangerous/risky model to follow, and consumer groups have to be constantly on guard. IBFAN's experience has shown that unless the commitments are independently monitored and carefully assessed - with on the ground research - the unintended consequences can easily be overlooked. Despite these risks Platforms involving food industries are now being promoted as a model internationally for the development of nutrition strategies. Without the presence of experienced consumer groups large corporations with big PR budgets will find it easy to convince governments that ultra-processed and hi-tech foods are the best way forward.

Ms Davies from *Which?* pointed out that an example of self-regulation is the UK's Responsibility Deal – there are clear targets and a clear expectation for action.

The European Consumers' Organisation made the point that besides the Responsibility Deal in UK, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has undertaken a considerable amount of work on the reduction of certain ingredients e.g. salt and fat. The FSA's work provides a framework for companies to take action.

European Heart Network mentioned that the High Level Group is setting the public health objectives. It is also important that commitments have a target and an objective. Furthermore, data are essential to measure whether progress is made. It is very difficult to make sure that the actual commitments are doing what they are meant to be doing in terms of impact.

FoodDrinkEurope commented that the Platform is successful and is a driver for tackling obesity. They also stated that they are working on methodology; however they have not been able to come up with a satisfactory method that could show results. Furthermore, they commented that the Lancet paper was not a peer reviewed article.

Mr Philippe Roux encouraged the Platform to consider how more actions can be delivered as well as proposals for new working methods and more collaboration with the High Level Group.

7. CONCLUSION

The Chair concluded that:

- Platform stakeholders need to reinforce actions; especially in the area of reformulation and the reduction of advertising to children.

¹ The Lancet, Volume 381, Issue 9867, Pages 670 - 679, 23 February 2013

- Future discussions in 2013 will continue to focus on research and the Platform stakeholders are invited to share ideas on research needs.

The next meeting of the Platform will be on 19 June and the Platform will discuss the 2012 annual report and exchange views on the commitments in the field of advertising. The meeting will be followed by a joint meeting with the High Level Group on 20 June 2013 where the results of external evaluation of the strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related Health issues will be discussed.