

Call from the High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity to the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health on food reformulation

The purpose of this call is to re-iterate the clear message from the High Level Group to the Platform not to delay action for food product reformulation for salt, sugars and fats in any food category.

As you know, the Commission supports the Member States' efforts to provide European citizens with healthier diets by reducing salt, saturated fats and added sugars intake. The support includes coordination and cooperation between the members of the High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity and the members of the EU Platform for action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

The industry members of the EU Platform expressed their willingness to reformulate their products to contribute to improving diets of the EU citizens (some members have made commitments on reaching the targets) and to cooperate with the national authorities on this topic (action plans/agreements on reformulation have been developed in some Member States).

The High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity agreed in 2011 on an EU Framework for National Initiatives on Selected Nutrients (a 2008 reformulation framework had been agreed to reduce salt in food by 16% in 4 years). Work then started on reducing saturated fat by 5% until 2016 and by an additional 5% by 2020. In December 2015, the Added Sugars Annex promoting a voluntary reduction of 10% in added sugars in processed food by 2020 was validated. These are the areas that have been identified by the High Level Group as priorities for **fighting chronic non-communicable diseases** and supporting national health systems.

Immediately after the adoption of the Added Sugars Annex, and following the agreement during the meeting with public and private stakeholders on 18 January 2016, DG SANTE organised meetings between the Member States' experts and industry to **promote implementation**.

These efforts included 3x3 web meetings (February and March 2016) between Member States and industry representatives to establish benchmarks per food category (started with sugar-sweetened beverages, dairy products and breakfast cereals) and also the setting up of **two working groups**: one on benchmarking, led by Member States, and one on monitoring which had both audio and physical meetings. The first results were presented on 23-24 November 2016 during the HLG and EU Platform meetings, respectively. At the Platform meeting (24 November), the monitoring and benchmarking main methods for reformulation initiatives, agreed by Member States, were passed by industry as well. These initial efforts to promote implementation pointed to the i) need to work on making available a baseline for reformulation based on common, comparable methodology; ii) potential benefit of national discussions per category; and iii) the urgency of industry pursuing efforts to meet the already agreed voluntary target of 10% reduction of added sugars (and the previously agreed targets for salt and saturated fat).

Following the conclusions above, the Commission supported the Joint Action on Nutrition and Physical Activity, in particular its work package 5, and is launching a project to produce a **snapshot of the nutritional quality of food products sold in the EU supermarkets**. Therefore at the EU level there is a monitoring system (based on JANPA methodology) and in the future there will be a baseline for food reformulation.

Considering all the above, the members of the High Level Group would like to call on food business operators to continue their efforts on food reformulation for salt, sugars and fats. Given that the general voluntary targets have been established, the monitoring methodology defined, and the baseline is being developed, **there is no reason to delay action in any category**. This is evident for the cases for which initiatives at national level are ongoing for some categories but should apply to all other cases as well. In other words, **all stakeholders should apply themselves in earnest to promoting the implementation of the reformulation frameworks** (without necessarily waiting for additional EU-level category-specific discussions).

At the same time we repeat our call – made at last year's meetings – to the industry members of the EU Platform to provide non-confidential market information to national authorities to support reformulation initiatives.

In this way Member States will be supported in reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the WHO Voluntary Global Targets on non-communicable diseases. Industry initiatives will contribute to reduce the important economic burden of obesity, strengthen health systems and promote the productivity and growth of the economy.