

MEETING OF THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP ON NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

18 FEBRUARY 2015
10.00 – 12.30

CHAIR: John F. Ryan, Acting Director SANCO C

DRAFT MINUTES

1. INTRODUCTION BY THE COMMISSION

The meeting was opened by the **Chair John F. Ryan** who welcomed the participants and introduced the agenda, centred on the on 'making the healthy option, the easier option' (area 3 of the Action Plan on Childhood Obesity), on social determinants of health and health inequalities, and on possible impacts of the Common Agriculture Policy on nutrition.

The Chair provided a brief overview of the outcome of the meeting of the national reformulation experts (17 February). The group members provided an update on the work at national level on reducing fat, salt and sugar, and on their priorities, and expressed their wish to take the reformulation work forward in the context of the EU Framework for National Initiatives on Selected Nutrients. The next step will be to decide on the priority nutrients for the drafting of additional annexes to the framework.

The draft agenda of the day was adopted. The High Level Group approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

2. MAKE THE HEALTHY OPTION, THE EASIER OPTION

Katarina Wahlgren, Ministry for Enterprise and Innovation, Sweden, presented the actions taken by the government and schools in Sweden, such as the Centre of Competence for meals in healthcare, education and social services. There is a legal requirement to provide cost-free and nutritious school meals to all children in preschools, schools and most upper secondary schools. Guidelines for school meals also play an important role in the Swedish school system.

In the debate that followed, several High Level Group Members gave a short update of their national situation and future plans in this area. The UK noted that they are trying to ensure that lunchtime is a pleasurable learning and eating experience. Slovenia said that a reformulation pledge will soon be signed with industry. Portugal and Greece pointed out that economic hardship makes it even more important for schools to be able to provide quality meals to children.

3. SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND HEALTH INEQUALITIES

3.1 EU ACTIONS ON SOCIAL DETERMINANTS

Mihaela Armanu, DG SANTE, presented the EU actions on social determinants of health. A new pilot project will start in 2015. It will support the work on social inequalities of both

the upcoming Joint Action on Nutrition and Physical Activity and the ongoing Joint Action on Reducing Alcohol Related Harm.

3.2 OBESITY AND INEQUALITIES

Tim Lobstein, World Obesity Federation, presented the results of the Joint Action on Health Inequalities that finished in 2014 and identified existing evidence gaps in surveillance, treatment, costs, community interventions and policy impacts. He underlined the necessity of improving interventions on health inequalities in order to achieve better results.

This was followed by a debate on how to make these interventions meant to address health inequalities work better and address the existing gaps. **The Chair** mentioned that research support funds managed by DG RTD could be used to address evidence gaps and help improve the effectiveness of policy on health inequalities. **Philippe Roux, DG SANTE**, added that the Member States should work together and share their experience on how to best address health inequalities. **The Chair** concluded that the issue of health inequalities should remain on the agenda of future meetings.

4. NATIONAL POLICY UPDATES

Charlene Vassallo, Ministry Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate, Malta, presented the new 'Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plan for Malta' for the years 2015 to 2020. This Action Plan has the goal of halting and reversing the obesity trend in both adults and children and promotes healthy nutrition as a basis for healthy behaviours. The Maltese Action Plan follows the principles of: an integrated government approach, a focus on equity, a life course approach, and an overall strengthening the health systems.

Katarzyna Stos, Polish National Food and Nutrition Institute, provided an update on the new rules on food and nutrition in Polish schools, as well as on self-regulation on food advertising to children. The new Polish Act on the Safety of Food and Nutrition will set rules for sales, advertising and promotion of foods, and will include requirements on nutrition for children and adolescents in schools, pre-schools and canteens with respect to nutrition standards and taking into account the nutritional and health value of food. For example there will be a positive list of products that will be allowed to be sold or used in canteens. With regards to food advertising to children, nutrition criteria based on the EU Pledge have been developed by the Polish Federation of Food Industry, reviewed and consulted with the National Food and Nutrition Institute on Poland. The implementation of a list of food categories that may be sold in schools, including requirements for food in schools canteens, is planned for September 2015.

5. POSSIBLE IMPACTS OF COMMON AGRICULTURE POLICY ON NUTRITION

Koen Dillen, DG AGRI, presented a forecast of the EU sugar market once the sugar quotas are abolished in 2017.

The price for sugar is expected to be lower after 2017 and there will be a (temporary) slight increase in sugar availability.

The first few years of the open market will also be important for the food industry to decide on an eventual move from using sugar to using isoglucose. These process changes require substantial investments and are not easily reversed. The current forecast is for the market share of isoglucose to grow but still remain far below the levels of the USA.

Mojca Gabrijeleic, Institute of Public Health, Slovenia, suggested a presentation at a future meeting on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and its possible impacts on the EU food market.

Judit Krommer, DG AGRI, gave an overview of the current School Fruit and Milk Schemes and presented the state of play of the new proposal, still under discussion. It merges both schemes and offers additional possibilities to support educational measures. These measures could include the promotion of the adoption of healthy eating habits in schoolchildren. Under the new scheme, €150 million would be available for fruit and vegetables and €80 million for milk (with the possibility of money transfer among these two schemes).

Astrid Potz, Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, Germany inquired on the reasons behind considering honey as an eligible product under the Fruit and Vegetables scheme. Ms Krommer responded that under the new scheme it would be up to schools to decide which products could be provided under "educational measures".

Stephanie Bodenbach, DG SANTE, further added that the inclusion of honey (100% sugar) is may not be in accordance with public health interests as there is little reason to promote the inclusion of (more) sugar in children's diets.

As a general closing remark, **the Chair** concluded that the discussion with DG AGRI should continue in order to ensure that public health aspects are taken into consideration.

6. JRC NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY BRIEFS

In order to improve the policy discussions on nutrition and physical activity, the Joint Research Centre developed policy briefs/policy dialogues. They are meant to support evidence-informed policy making, especially in the context of the Action Plan on Childhood Obesity. The policy briefs, shared with the High Level Group members in advance of the meeting, were presented for comments by **Theodora Mouratidou, Joint Research Centre**.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members were updated on the agenda and logistic arrangements concerning the Expo Milan. The next meeting in Ispra provides an opportunity for the High Level Group members to take part in the Opening Conference (2 May), where DG SANTE has organised a session on 'Nutrition and Health'.

A summary of the outcomes of the WHO/FAO ICN2 meeting was presented by Stephanie Bodenbach, who highlighted that the two main outcome documents (the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the Framework for Action) were endorsed by governments participating at the conference.

8. CONCLUSION

The Chair

- noted the progress made in area 3 of the Action Plan on Childhood Obesity and underlined the importance of continued action in the other areas;
- underlined the importance to take health inequalities into account when drafting policy and suggested to have regular reporting on this topic in this Group.

The next meeting will be on **4 May in Ispra**. One of its main topics will be the **promotion of healthier environments, especially in schools and pre-schools** (area 2 of the Action Plan on Childhood Obesity).