



Confédération des industries agro-alimentaires de l'UE
Confederation of the food and drink industries of the EU

Industry remains active in fight to tackle lifestyle-related diseases despite crisis

Brussels, 4 December 2009 - Despite the financial crisis, industry is continuing efforts to help consumers better manage their diets, an independent survey of over 1,500 food and drinks companies commissioned by the CIAA in 5 major European markets has found.

Over 20% of all surveyed companies reduced the amount of saturated fat, salt/sodium or sugars in their products during 2008, the survey found. A quarter of the companies stated that they increased the range of options they offered in packaging sizes that year, with two-thirds of those stating they were now offering smaller sizes. Approximately one third said that in 2008 they had introduced or planned to introduce, 'nutrition labelling that gives guideline daily amount information for things like energy (calories), fat, saturated fat, sugars, sodium or other nutrients'.

Last year, a survey of over 2,000 companies investigated these behaviours from 2004 to 2007. Both surveys were carried out in the same five major EU markets: France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK. Food and beverage companies of all food sectors and sizes, from family-owned bakeries to large multinationals, were surveyed.

During the four years to 2007, 43 % of companies said they had taken steps to reduce saturated fat, sodium and sugars. With 21% then reformulating in one single year, 2008, the trend to reformulate seems to be accelerating. Larger companies, with bigger product ranges, are much more likely to act, with corporate members playing a leading role. 82% of them reformulated or innovated in 2008.

"The two surveys paint a picture of a food and drink industry that is responding to public health needs at a remarkable rate, considering its extremely fragmented nature", said Jesús Serafín Pérez, President of the CIAA. "The vast majority (over 94%) of food and drink companies in Europe surveyed were micro, small or medium-sized, so this is a particularly noteworthy achievement."

The reasons given for not reformulating are illuminating, too. For about half, reformulation was not relevant because their products are (a) fresh, (b) contain little salt/sodium, sugars or saturated fat to begin with, or (c) are made according to a traditional recipe or as foreseen under EU legislation. The surveys thus suggest that the majority of companies for whom reformulation is a sensible option have already done so, or are considering doing so in the near future.

Consumers also need clear information to make educated choices about their diets. Here too, the survey shows, industry is making clear progress. The majority of products in Europe that can carry nutrition labelling (i.e., those that are wrapped) already do, or will do so soon. Among the different nutritional information systems, the CIAA-backed GDA scheme is making the biggest gains: almost 70% of large companies are already using it, with a growing number of smaller firms following suit.



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These industry efforts are part of a CIAA-led commitment made to the European Commission in 2005, under the *EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*¹, designed to reduce lifestyle-related diseases (such as obesity, for example). Given the multifaceted nature of this problem, it requires the cooperation of many parts of society and the strength of the Platform is therefore in its bringing together stakeholders such as regulators, health professionals, NGOs and industry to discuss and agree on the key measures needed to meet this challenge. To participate, members must sign up with commitments to make a difference. CIAA, one of the largest members of the Platform, is responsible for about 40% of all such commitments.

The trend revealed by this second independent survey is an encouraging one. Companies big and small are engaging in behaviours that demonstrate their commitment to the EU Platform. As a direct result of these initiatives, EU food and drink manufacturers are proposing an ever greater choice of reformulated products bearing more and clearer information, in smaller portion sizes.

CIAA expects the rate of change to speed up in coming years, as the effects of the financial crisis wear off, legal uncertainty is lifted and peer pressure operates its magic. Consumers, already enjoying an increasing range of options to manage their and their family's diets, will continue to benefit.

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CIAA represents the European food and drink industry – the largest manufacturing sector, major employer and exporter in the EU. CIAA's mission is to help proactively develop an environment in which all European food and drink companies, whatever their size, can compete effectively for sustainable growth meeting the needs of the consumers and playing their part in delivering the targets set by the Lisbon declaration of the European Council. CIAA membership is made up of 26 national federations, 29 European sector associations and 22 major food and drink companies. For more information on CIAA and its activities, visit: www.ciaa.eu

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/platform/platform_en.htm