

**European Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health
Combating obesity**

HOTREC baseline and commitment document

Status on 30 January 2006

The national associations of HOTREC, Hotels, Restaurants and Cafés in Europe¹, share the concerns of the European and national authorities in relation to the issue of nutrition determining citizens' health to a great extent. They therefore welcome the efforts undertaken by the Commission in setting up a European Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health for action to combat obesity.

This Platform allows for a useful exchange of views, experiences and best practices in an open dialogue with a great variety of stakeholders.

However, as stated by the Commission in its health reflection paper of 15 July 2004 "*whether or not people eat healthy food or practice sports is a matter of personal choice*". This choice cannot be regulated at any level. The authorities can only raise awareness, educate and facilitate the dissemination of good practice. Because eating habits and lifestyles vary to a large extent with geography and cultures, solutions can only be suggested at national level. Information from our sector is therefore presented on a national association basis.

HOTREC would finally like to emphasize the need to bear in mind the social and cultural role of restaurants: most restaurant customers are not looking merely for a good meal, served at an affordable price, but also for a leisure experience. A meal in a restaurant usually combines the pleasures of company, taste, sight and sound in attractive surroundings. Eating out plays an important role in the community throughout the European Union.

¹ HOTREC is the spokesperson of hotels, restaurants and cafés at European institutional level in all matters affecting the sector. HOTREC projects the voice of hotels, restaurants and cafés in the European Union, an industry that boasts 1,4 million businesses and provides 7,5 million jobs in the EU alone. HOTREC brings together 36 National Trade and Employer Associations representing the interest of the sector in 22 different European countries.

Along these lines and taking account of the specificities of the restaurant industry mentioned above, HOTREC, encourages its member associations

- to participate in national platforms and other projects relating to diet and health; and
- to publish information on such platforms and projects on their websites so as to make it available to their member establishments.

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Overview of the activities at national level
(Status on 22 September 2005 – further replies still awaited)

Hotel Association Hungary (HAH):

Our association is not member of a national platform on obesity.

We have not launched any initiatives, activities in relation to the issue.

We are not aware of studies, except for studies on eating habits of the population as well as various articles on healthy, balanced food

Restaurants Association of Ireland (RAI):

Report of the National Taskforce on Obesity 2005 (132 p.)

Submission by the Restaurants Association of Ireland to the National Task Force on Obesity (May 2004):

Introduction

The Restaurants Association of Association of Ireland is the established voice of the restaurant sector. The association was founded in 1970 and presently has over 500 members. There is a high concentration of members in major cities and high density urban areas and also the well established tourist spots through out the country. Since its foundation the association has promoted a healthy approach to dining proactively to its membership.

The association had undertaken various initiative and promotional activities on the consumption on quality foods. The RAI welcomes this initiative by the Health Promotion Unit and offers its full support in the task going forward.

Position to date

As previously stated the Association is always promoted the healthy attitude to food consumption in its member's restaurants. The support of indigested food production methods and products that are wholesomely produced are a key element in the RAI philosophy. In 1996 the association set about a program to try and establish an Irish Cuisine. The association has developed simple criteria for this promotion namely the creative uses of local products. This initiative was the foundation for the Association's next initiative, which was the establishment of the Faile Bia program, again the emphasis is here was the celebration of quality Irish food in Irish restaurants by creative cooking. The RAI asked other organisations representing other sectors of the catering industry to join forces in this initiative and the Faile Bia Day was established on the June the 6th of 1999. In the year 2000 the daylong celebration became weeklong, with producers asked to join in the initiative. Organic farmers, specialist food producers, i.e. cheese makers, supported the initiative for a week in June in the year 2000. This initiative from the outset had the financial support of Bord Bia and the promotion was administered and managed by the RAI. In 2001 Bord Bia formally became a partners in the ownership in the Faile Bia program, which now developed itself into a quality ensure initiative. With a high emphasis on the traceability of product used by the participating restaurant, the Faile Bia program is constantly monitored with a view to improvement. The RAI and the Irish Hotel Federation (our partner) and Bord Bia are committed to its continue success.

The RAI have supported the Irish Heart Foundation's Happy Heart initiative since its inception. Each year prior to the commencement of the Happy Heart program the association canvasses its members to participate. Presentations to grassroot members take place at branch meetings in most of the association's network of 10 branches. Again this year RAI members are committed to the Irish Hearth Foundation program which will commence on the 1st of June 2004. A recent meeting of the RAI council decided that members should be encouraged to high light healthy options to diners through out the year consistent with the Happy Heart Program. It was also decided at this meeting that discussion should take place with the Irish Heart foundation to seek their help in developing this concept further.

Future

As stated above the RAI is committed to improve menu options to meet all dietary requirements for restaurant diners. However this will require an innovative approach. It is the association's attention to dialog with the Irish Heart Foundation and their dieticians involved with this program and to also seek the help of the Health Promotion Unit at the Department of Health and Children.

There is a particular challenge also to establishment in the convenience/popular dinning sector. The RAI are committed to helping their members in such establishment in providing healthy options for their customers. This area is a particular concern to the Association and needs specific research to help address the problem.

Finally the association is committed to support the National Task Force on Obesity initiative and are willing and happy to engage in any consultation to this end.

Swedish Hotel and Restaurant Association (SHR):

There have been a couple of platforms on obesity in Sweden, both for the food sector only and, during the years, a few bigger platforms with food associations, government and the national food administration. The main activities have been meetings with information, discussion and some seminars.

The association has not launched any specific initiatives in relation to obesity, healthy diets and nutrition, but we are involved in a voluntary certification for healthy food on restaurant. It is called KeyMeal and it is based on the Swedish green keyhole symbol.

The Government has commissioned the National Food Administration (NFA) and the National Institute of Public Health (IPH), after consultation with specified actors, to produce a proposal for a plan of action for healthy eating habits and increased physical activity in the Swedish population. The plan was released in April 2005. In the plan there are a few proposals for the restaurant sector. Mainly the proposals suggest labelling healthy food with the green keyhole symbol.

Norwegian Hospitality Association (NHA/RBL):

RBL (NHA) is working closely with Gastronomisk Institutt, Matforsk and The University of biochemistry, especially regarding low carbohydrates, fat and GI.

RBL (NHA) is not a member of any national organization for healthy diets and nutrition.

Our industry becomes more and more engaged with healthy food, because there is a great demand from the opinion/market.

RBL (NHA) attended Horestas's seminar in Copenhagen the 2nd of May 2005, together with SHR (Sweden) and SAF (Iceland). The Nordic organizations agreed to work closely to promote healthy food in our business.

The Norwegian Government is considering if it should make a proposal that every school should give the pupils a meal. The intention is that young people should get acquainted with healthy food.

Finnish Hotel and Restaurant Association (FHR):

In Finland there is strong impact of Public Authorities to health and nutrition matters. Public Authorities have established National Nutrition Council, where agriculture, food industry, consumers, health care, education and research organisations take part. The Council publish every year recommendations to define appropriate nutrient intakes for population groups and to evaluate the goals for improving public health. The recommendations are widely used when serving food. Recommendations give advice for the basic composition of diet and nutrient intake and advice on food choice.

Many times Contract Catering Companies go much further when adopting the nutrition values of the Council. Companies have developed a quality system in order to tackle clients' requests regarding better nutrition and good health. They have revised recipes to reduce saturated fat and salt. Also they have achieved to take account to special diets and ingredients causing allergy when preparing menus.

Special emphasis has been given to pupils in school and children in kindergarten to understand the importance of eating a well-balanced meal and having good eating behaviour. Here is to be mentioned that in Finland the school meals are mainly produced

by state owned schools, but increasingly catering businesses are taking responsibility of food producing in education. According the law, pupils and students must be provided every school day with an appropriately organized and directed free meal that is sufficient in quantity. Following the nutrition recommendations, school lunch should meet one third of the pupils' daily nutritional requirements.

At national level Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has set up a competitive strategy for the food quality management. All parties involved in the chain of food production, have prepared a quality programme and quality targets. Finnish Hotel and Restaurant Association is one of the parties implementing the strategy. The intention is to develop a customer oriented products/meals and operational quality by coordinating in the production chain "from farm to table". Together with the actors in hospitality sector, with strong contribution of Contract Catering Companies, Finnish Hotel and Restaurant Organisation is preparing a national food safety recommendation, which at the same time ensures the high quality of served food.

National strategy of food quality management and mutual understanding between food producers, suppliers and consumers makes that no further actions against obesity has been conducted at national level. The same occurs at company level.

Excellent health care system makes that the health of Finnish children is exemplary. Concerning adult population, most prevalent health problems comes from cardiovascular disease, with diabetes and osteoporosis as increasing problems. Obesity, having connections to prevalent health problems, has been increasing though.

Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA):

There is no national platform of which one can become a member. However, there is a Governmental Health Promotion Department which strives to help the Maltese people improve their health, avoid preventable illness and live healthier lifestyles. It disseminates information on nutrition, eating disorders, women's health, sexually transmitted diseases and stopping smoking. It also gives support to non-governmental organisations and self-help groups, gives advice and treatment on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV counselling, and runs smoking cessation clinics and weight reduction classes

The Maltese association has not launched any specific initiatives in relation to obesity, healthy diets and nutrition.

The Health Promotion Department conducts studies in schools on eating habits, and on a national level on buying trends. The Department disseminates information through the media, with regular presence in radio programmes, television and in the print media.

Although the association is not doing any studies or research, the Health Promotion Department conducts menu evaluation for restaurants on request basis.

Federação da Restauração, Cafés, Pastelarias e Similares de Portugal (FERECA):

At the present moment, our association (FERECA) does not participate in any national program related to the topics mentioned.

ARESP (Associação da Restauração e Similares de Portugal), a member of FERECA, started recently to give free consultations in nutrition specifically designed for our associated members who wish to improve the nutritional quality of the products they offer in their companies.

At the same time, a few articles referring to nutrition are being published in our monthly magazine which has free distribution through all the associate members.

At the governmental level the authorities created a National Plan to fight obesity. This plan foresees the union of some state, private, non-governmental institutions, local authorities and private companies and it doesn't include directly the restaurant sector.

Beyond this program other types of actions have been taken by non-governmental institutions.

The Institute of the Consumer (IC) in cooperation with the College of Nutritional Sciences from Porto University (FCNAUP) has recently launched a dietary guide for the Portuguese population and designed information software on healthy eating.

Some major restaurant chains in the market develop some strategies in the communication with the customer about subjects like diet, nutrition and promotion of physical activity. Other initiatives come from partnerships with associations, foundations or other organizations that ask for the support of these companies in the transmission of messages and information on diet, nutrition and health.

Besides the partnerships referred to above, there is no other program or initiative that involves the restaurant sector.

Union des Métiers et des Industries de l'Hôtellerie (UMIH) – France:

At the moment our association is not member of such a national platform.

UMIH will launch as of October 2005 a national nutrition programme with des restaurateurs in partnership with the ACCOR group.

Information note for the press:

« ACCOR SERVICES ET L'UMIH S'ENGAGENT POUR L'EQUILIBRE ALIMENTAIRE

Le 6 octobre 2005 sera lancé en France un programme mondial auprès des restaurateurs affiliés et utilisateurs du ticket restaurant. André DAGUIN, John du Monceau, Vice-président du Directoire de ACCOR, Ambroise MARTIN, Professeur en nutrition à la Faculté de Médecine de Lyon et Alice BARDET, Directrice du restaurant le Point Bar à Paris sont les porte paroles de ce programme de nutrition qui vous sera dévoilé au mois d'octobre afin que les professionnels soient largement associés. »

In 2001 has been launched a national program “nutrition – health” by the French government which aims to improve health of French people acting on the nutrition (information about needs of children, pregnant women, old people in a guide; media campaign to promote fruit and vegetables; creation of a website; integration of the notion of nutrition at school: installation of water fountains, removal of vending machine of sweets, guide on meals in school canteens...).

Several chains of restaurants (flunch...) have adapted their meal according to this program and give information on it in their website.

Moreover, the French government is, at the moment, voting laws which provide the creation of a national agency of the fight against obesity (Agence Nationale de lutte contre l’obésité) within the ministry of health and to institute an “education day about food hygiene” to fight against wrong habits of children today and to preserve the adult’s health tomorrow.

There is no initiative that relates more specifically to the restaurant sector.

Syndicat National des Hôteliers, Restaurateurs, Cafetiers et Traiteurs (SYNHORCAT) – France:

Our association is not a member of a national platform.

Our association, SYNHORCAT, supports the initiative launched by the foundation Louis Bonduelle, which has chosen Tuesday as "Vegetable Day". The aim of this operation is to encourage people to eat more vegetables and to promote a well-balanced diet. Its success will depend upon a close and lasting partnership between caterers and Bonduelle food service.

Association of the Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Industry in Denmark (HORESTA)

In Denmark the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, and the Institute of Food Safety and Nutrition are doing studies on the issue of nutrition and obesity (i.e. “Portion size of low- and full-fat food items”, “Size of commercial foods”, “Added sugars from commercial foods”)

The official authorities in collaboration with research nutritionists (National Consumer Agency of Denmark, The Danish Government Home Economics Council) prepared evidence- and action-based dietary guidelines.

Horesta is not formally member of such a platform. There have been several initiatives on national level where HORESTA has participated together with other associations.

HORESTA has done a project together with the Danish Institute for Food and Veterinary Research, in the period of January – July 2005 “Corporate Nutritional Responsibility in foodservice”. HORESTA organised a Nordic Network Seminar in May 2005 in Copenhagen on the subject. <http://www.horesta.dk/index.asp?id=3701>

In November 2005 HORESTA is going to participate in a seminar (Nordic) on the same subject. Hosts are the Nordic Government Bodies.

HORESTA has asked their members (Restaurants) about their use of fat and fatty acids in meals, and their opinion of the customer's interest in diets and fat and fatty acids.

In June 2005 HORESTA hosted a Nordic workshop for business associations, authorities, research centres, and schools with the purpose of identifying the issues to discuss in relation to "eating out of home", and obesity and nutrition. The outcome of the workshop is presently being digested within the Nordic associations with the purpose of launching project activities this autumn.

At this point it seems clear that future focus areas will include meals in schools and institutions, childrens menus, and menus in conference facilities.

Moreover, in June 2005 the members of HORESTA participated in a research together with the Danish Institute for Food and Veterinary Research where the costumers of the restaurants are asked about their interest in healthy choice in restaurants.

HTS participated in the Obesity summit initiative taken by Fødevareindustrien (Foodstuff Industry) (www.fedetopmode.dk). The summit was held on 3-5 March 2005 and the meeting convened 48 experts' executives for 48 hours to discuss and develop concrete ideas for action which could be taken by industry, by government and by NGOs. An important agreement was that actors should seek to work in partnerships to promote the needed battle against obesity and that eating should be seen in conjunction with physical activity.

This last recognition sets out some important implications for the out of home sector, because it implies that out of home caterers should not necessarily restrict themselves to think in terms of foods but rather seer their service as a lifestyle product involving both a food part as well as a activity part. Results from the summit can be viewed at the website and since a number involve out of home eating they are and important source of information.

What out of home caterers could do

The concrete action that out of home caterers could take along with their trade organisations has been grouped into five categories in the current project.

- ***Procurement specifications for nutritious foods***
This step is aimed at developing nutrition criterions for procurement of foods. These will be categorised in food groups
- ***Educational needs for chefs and catering staff in nutrition***
This part aims at developing the curriculum needed for educating chefs and other catering staff in nutrition and nutritional management issues.
- ***Nutrition tools for kitchens***
This part aims at creating an overview of nutrition materials and tools produced by caterers. The material will be reviewed and proposal for future directions should be created.

- ***Nutrition model for out of home eating***
This part aims at developing a framework for nutrition modelling in out of home eating. It should break the ground for alternatives or further development of plate models, diet pyramids etc.
- ***Healthy alternatives to convenience foods***
In this part healthy alternatives to convenience foods will be investigated. Many caterers are dependant on convenience foods which are often high in fat, sugar or salt. By developing or sourcing for alternative raw materials healthy alternative meals could result

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration see it as one of its objects to promote better food and a healthy diet. The vision is that fewer people should get ill from bad food or bad eating habits.

The field of nutrition covers eating habits, what kind of food people eat, food contents of vitamins, energizing nutrients, minerals as well as additives, dietary recommendations and advice on the matter of food and health issues.

6-a-day is a major project with the purpose of stimulating people to eat more fruits and vegetables. 6-a-day refers to the advised daily consumption of about 600 g of fruits and vegetables.

“The project ‘Diet in a nutshell – a taste for life’ is intended to stimulate the establishment of a range of dietary schemes in schools and institutions, and also to give the entire population access to the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration’s knowledge of food via new website www.altomkost.dk

Some of the issues discussed by the research are:

Will the healthy eating initiatives taken by food industry lead to more healthy eating and what will the impact of these initiatives be if they were to be compared other measures?

What are the implications of this development for government bodies? How should the risk managers in the field of nutrition react to this development and how should risk assessors and researchers react?

If companies increasingly take responsibility for healthy eating issues and take over the role of governments then how can consumer’s rights be protected? Should they be protected by companies and what will the implications of that be?

In what form can consumers be said to have human rights when it comes to healthy food? What are the limits between individual responsibility and corporate and community responsibility?

Are food corporations prepared for managing the challenge? Or do we need a managerial framework and benchmarking tools that food industry can use to manage nutritional and healthy eating issues. And if so should that be developed by governments, research, NGOs or by industry themselves?

What happens with the right of the consumers when food industries are getting bigger and more and more Trans national and globalise? In the case of IT companies we experience support teams located in other countries even in other continents. Will they be able support costumers in a reasonable way?

If corporations should take responsibility then the next question to ask would be: Does it pay for a corporation to behave nutritionally responsible? And what is the time perspective? Is it so that it is unsustainable for a food company to continue to sell unhealthy food to it customers. Research is

needed her on early movers and cutting edge experience. And if it does not pay should it then be a part of their philanthropic responsibility to take responsibility anyway?

Brief overview of initiatives taken by out of home caterers

There has been some very interesting project in 6 a day in catering (Food on work) and “More healthy meeting”(www.6omdagen.dk/mode)

EUREST A/S has started an initiative aimed at substituting semi prepared meals and products with healthy alternatives and the IDA catering operator have launched its own healthy eating initiative. A number of independent worksite catering facilities has participated in the 5 a day fruit and vegetables project and a substantial number of worksite caterers now participate in the MINFF supported Mad på arbejde (www.mad-paa-arbejde.dk)

In Sweden Amica has launched a healthy eating initiative and in the Nordic countries a number of private catering companies and chains are working together in the HealthCat consortium to promote healthy eating.

The main driver for such initiatives is the fact that employees take a substantial proportion of their meals at worksite and thus this contributes significantly to their nutrition. Although this is not the case in a la carte restaurants there is a growing interest in this type of facilities to have healthy alternatives.

In the fast food sector a number of initiatives have been launched. The Subway chain is branding itself on healthy meals and in McDonalds considerable efforts has been raised to promote salad meals and this effort can be seen also in the marketing efforts carried out by this chain.

In the “sund mad på farten” (Food on go) initiative” taken by Agrova and other food manufacturers healthy alternative has been developed for sale in traffic catering (Members of HORESTA) and gas stations.

Koninklijk HORECA Nederland (KHN):

KHN participates in a national platform. Together with the relevant stakeholders KHN signed a gentleman’s agreement for a period of six months. Within those six months every stakeholder is looking for solutions - within his own sector - that can help to reduce the problems. After six months this leads up to different smaller agreements, like physical activity, consumer information, food, etc. Every stakeholder can decide to participate in a smaller agreement or not.

KHN has not yet launched any specific initiatives in relation to obesity, healthy diets and nutrition. But it is preparing an action plan, which shall be presented in September or October 2005. The strategy set out in this action plan will be the following: every consumer is responsible for his own actions, he makes his own choices. Obesity is not only a threat, but also a chance. Use those chances. KHN’s action plan foresees to stimulate the entrepreneur to take some action, on a voluntary basis.

A major study was done in the Netherlands in 2004 entitled “Measuring our food”. Also the food habits of children, teenagers and adults is being investigated every two or three years.

None of these studies relate more specifically to the restaurant sector.

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