



Adjusting social norms about food consumption

Remarks from the French experience

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Since 2001, some results

Children obesity

>97th centile : 60 's : 3%

80 's : 6%

90 's : 12%

>IOTF 25 : 2000 : 18,1% 2007 : 18,1%

>IOTF 30 : 2000 : 3,8% 2007 : 4%

From 1999 to 2006, evolution of the consumption

	Children	Adults
Fruits	↗	↗
Vegetables	→	→
Sugary products	↘	↘
Dairy products	↘	↘
Starchy foods	→	→

A basis : the food culture

a condition to improve the food environment

- What are the food representations?

what is the “value” given to food and to the different kinds of foods?

- Who is legitimate to give guidance on food aspects?

Experts, media, public authorities, mothers, the economic sector?

- What is eating? What is “eating well” “enjoy food”?

A way to fill an engine, to maintain health, to be happy, to communicate, to share?

The differences between countries

- - “Sometimes when I have to do shopping, I don’t eat at lunch time, I have to buy something at the “boulangerie” which I eat while I am walking, otherwise I can’t take it”
- - “To have a balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, carbohydrates and proteins, I think you need a balance of all of these things. To have enough to satisfy your hunger and maintain your health without being gluttonous”
- “I’m not gonna eat like you and you’re not gonna eat like me... It’s a question with the individual person himself....every body in this room got a choice about what they wanna eat”
- - “It’s having a nice meal with friends with a tray of sea foods, it’s eating a traditional dish, for instance a “pot au feu”, with the family, to pay a nice restaurant from time to time”
- 4 friends, who pays the bill at the restaurant?
 - Divided by 4 : 56% in F, 30% in USA ; According to individual consumption : 19% F, 50% US

an individualistic versus a social view

The semantic aspect

➤ Too often, the word « nutrition » is linked with an idea of a restrictive diet, with a medical meaning

Nutrition has a negative sound : it is « moral », it is risk, it is sad

➤ The way energy dense foods are marketed give an idea of pleasure, +/- nature, youth, dynamism, strength, energy... (positive values of our societies)

➤ The word « plaisir alimentaire » was preempted by the sugar industry)

➤ What is an Obese person? More seen on a esthetic point of view, a jovial person, a person with a weak will

➤ The responsibility point of view (who is responsible)

To eat with pleasure for Health

Main strategic options

The key word : coherence

- To allow an informed consumer choice (individual freedom)
 - Information, education, communication TV campaigns, leaflets, pedagogical tools, labelling
- To improve the nutritional environment (social responsibility of all stakeholders)
 - through the improvement of the food and physical environment : make the healthy choice the easiest.
- **Many combined ways to act :**
 - Public local, regional and national initiatives
 - Reglementation, law
 - Private self regulation and initiatives

What is done?

Some actions to change the food environment

- At school :
 - The total ban of vending machines since september 2005 (by law)
 - A decree is prepared on the nutritional quality of school meals (attention to the quality of taste) - a meal price according to the family revenue.
 - A recommandation to avoid snacks at school (a public initiative)
 - An official ministerial document to avoid commercial brands in schools-- a strong recommandation to accept **only** documents with the “PNNS logo”(a public frame for private initiatives)
 - A national initiative to distribute, free of charge, fruits in underprivileged district schools (a public initiative with private commitments)

Some actions to change the food environment

- Health messages on all promotional documents for manufactured foods and beverages (by law and decrees since march 2007)
- Charters of commitments to nutritional improvements (a standard reference document to have a public control on the validity of the proposals)

Under discussion :

A ban of some TV food advertisements for children (which foods and which times during the day?)

How to ban confectionary foods at “caisses” (tills) in the supermarkets

Programme
National

Nutrition
Santé



Issue:The hierarchy of pleasures

Recommendation: To implement a long term programme with the whole cultural sector and popular personalities in order to give a high social value to the search for tasty/good food

Rationale: Rationality is only a small part of the way humans choose their foods and the way they eat. Many values are transmitted through food. Tasty (and healthy) foods have to be valued within the society, as a cultural norm : food should not be considered as a “throw away” good.

Issue: The contradiction between health messages and the educational environment of children.

Recommendation: Remove from the schools and education settings all kinds of commercial food promotion (using products, sponsoring, pedagogical tools...). The law might be used.

Rationale: Youth is a very important time for the building up of behaviours. School, family and media are the main education pillars. Coherence between health messages and environment has to exist, at least at school. The goal is education of the citizen.

Issue: Massive portions, extra large sizes...

Recommendation: Start a Public and mediatised discussion with experts, consumers and the whole food sector (industry, retailers, caterers, fast foods providers...) to point out the responsibility of the large size portions (and promotions) on the development of pathologies (and individual health expenses)

Rationale: The first point in order to limit obesity is to limit energy intake. Reduction of portion sizes is the main way to reduce energy intake

Issue: A pathogenic urban environment

Recommendation: For all urban projects (urbanistics or architectural), include a health perspective (through health and physical activity experts and sociologists) in order to facilitate/make people want to exercise on a daily basis (walking, bicycling...). For instance have shops close to the houses....

Rationale: Physical activity is necessary to prevent obesity and globally to maintain health. If the environment is not secure nor facilitating, people cannot and won't exercise daily