



Challenges for the implementation of nutrition policies: The role of consumer organisations

A UK example

Sue Davies

Chief Policy Adviser

Which?



The role of consumer organisations

- Background to Which?
- Nutrition - a priority
- Representing the consumer interest
- Example: marketing of foods high in fat, sugar and salt to children
- Role of public private partnerships



Background to Which?

- Established in 1957
- EU's largest consumer organisation - over 700,000 members
- Independent of government and industry
- Member of BEUC, Consumer International & the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue

We exist to make individuals as powerful as the organisations that they have to deal with in their everyday lives.

Nutrition - a consumer priority

- Around a quarter of UK adults are now obese
- 14.5 per cent of children under 11 and 21.5 per cent of 12 to 16 year olds in England are obese
- Around a third of deaths from coronary heart disease and a third of deaths from cancer are due to poor diet
- A Which? 2004 survey found that:
 - > 70 per cent of those surveyed thought the Government should do more to promote what we should be eating for a healthy diet
 - > Over three quarters (78 per cent) thought that manufacturers need to take more responsibility for helping people to eat a healthy diet.



Consumer organisations' role in relation to nutrition

- Starting point:
 - > What are the barriers that make it difficult for consumers to choose a healthy diet?
 - > What actions are needed to make healthier choices easier?



Consumer organisations' role in relation to nutrition

- Two main aspects to our work:
 - > Providing clear, independent information and advice for consumers
 - > Campaigning for action by the Government and by industry which will make it easier for consumers to put healthy eating advice into practice

Which?'s 'Health Warning to Government' February 2004

- 12 demands:
 - > Government to prioritise nutrition policy by establishing a Nutrition Council
 - > Government to set clear goals to reduce obesity in children and adults
 - > Introduction of a children's watershed for food advertising
 - > A Government/ industry standard on responsible marketing of food to children
 - > A school food standard
 - > A national nutrition labelling scheme to identify foods high in fat, sugar and salt (multiple traffic lights on front of pack)



Which?'s 12 demands continued

- > Tighter controls over foods presented as healthy
- > Manufacturers, retailers and caterers to reduce fat, sugar and salt levels in foods
- > Government to examine financial incentives and disincentives
- > Supermarkets to make it easier for consumers to choose healthier options
- > Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy - a consumer focused-food policy
- > Innovative government campaign to help change eating habits



Representing the consumer interest

- Analysing the problem, developing practical solutions
- Understanding consumers' perspective through consumer research
- Assessing company practices, highlighting good and poor practice
- Representing consumers through consultations, working groups and other platforms
- Engaging with consumers and helping them to take action

Example: Marketing of foods high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) to children

Analysing the problem, developing practical solutions

- Food promotion influences children's food preferences and choices
- Children eat too much fat, sugar and salt and not enough fruit and vegetables
- The advertised diet contradicts the recommended one
- The most children are watching television in the evening

- A more responsible approach therefore requires:
 - > Restrictions on the TV advertising of HFSS foods at the times most children are watching (9 pm watershed)
 - > Restrictions on other, non-broadcast advertising and promotion that ensure foods high in fat, sugar and salt are not marketed to children under 16.

Example: Marketing of foods high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) to children

Consumer research

- 2003 survey found that 70% of parents thought there should no advertising of junk foods during children's TV viewing times
- 2004 focus groups with parents highlighted their frustration with the use of cartoon characters and celebrities endorsing foods high in fat, sugar and salt
- 2006 survey found that 79% of parents agreed TV ads for unhealthy foods should not be allowed during the times that children are most likely to be watching TV
- 86% of parents agreed 'the Government should do more to control the way that unhealthy foods are marketed to children
- 2006 survey found that 77% of respondents thought food companies that sponsor sports events should be more responsible in the way they market their products
- Consumer e-mails to our web-site

Example: Marketing of HFSS foods to children

Highlighting industry practices



Example: Marketing of HFSS foods to children
Highlighting industry practices



Example: Marketing of HFSS foods to children

Highlighting industry practices

Cereals targeted at children: those with pictures or cartoons on the front of the packet

Product	What's in a portion? ¹	Nutrition information								Is hydrogenated vegetable oil listed as an ingredient?	Can this be advertised?
		Sugars		Fat		Saturates		Salt			
		per 100g	per portion	per 100g	per portion	per 100g	per portion	per 100g	per portion		
Crunch											
Mornflake Pecan & Maple Crisp	50g cereal	24.90	12.50	17.10	8.50	6.00	3.00	Trace	Trace	No	No
Mornflake Strawberry Crisp	50g cereal	26.60	13.30	14.90	7.40	4.70	2.30	0.75	0.38	No	No
Flakes											
Asda Choco Flakes	30g cereal, 125ml milk	37.00	11.10	0.70	0.21	0.30	0.09	1.75	0.53	No	No
Asda Frosted Flakes	30g cereal, 125ml milk	38.00	11.40	0.50	0.15	0.30	0.09	1.50	0.45	No	No
Kelloggs Frosties	30g cereal, 125ml milk	37.00	11.10	0.60	0.18	0.10	0.03	1.15	0.35	No	No
Kelloggs Reduced Sugar Frosties	30g cereal, 125ml milk	25.00	7.50	0.60	0.18	0.10	0.03	1.40	0.42	No	No
Sainsbury's Choco Flakes	30g cereal, 125ml milk	36.80	11.04	0.70	0.21	0.40	0.12	1.50	0.45	No	No
Sainsbury's Frosted Flakes	30g cereal, 125ml milk	38.10	11.43	0.50	0.15	0.30	0.09	1.50	0.45	No	No
Sainsbury's Reduced Sugar Frosted Flakes	30g cereal, 125ml milk	25.00	7.50	1.00	0.30	0.40	0.12	1.20	0.36	No	No
General											
Asda Golden Balls	30g cereal, 125ml milk	38.00	11.40	1.50	0.45	0.30	0.09	0.75	0.23	No	No
Nestle Football Crisp	30g cereal, 125ml milk	35.40	10.62	3.70	1.11	1.30	0.39	0.80	0.24	No	No



Highlighting industry practices Examples of recent campaign reports

- Recipe for Disaster (ready meals)
- Healthy Ranges - the Slim Truth?
- Day Chipper (food at tourist attractions)
- Cereal Offenders
- Cereal Reoffenders
- Low Fact Labels
- The Facts Behind Fast Food
- Shark Tales and Incredible Endorsements
- Child Catchers (marketing tactics aimed at children)
- Health Signs? (front of pack nutrition labelling)
- What's Really on the Menu? (Nutrition information when eating out)



Example: Marketing of HFSS foods to children

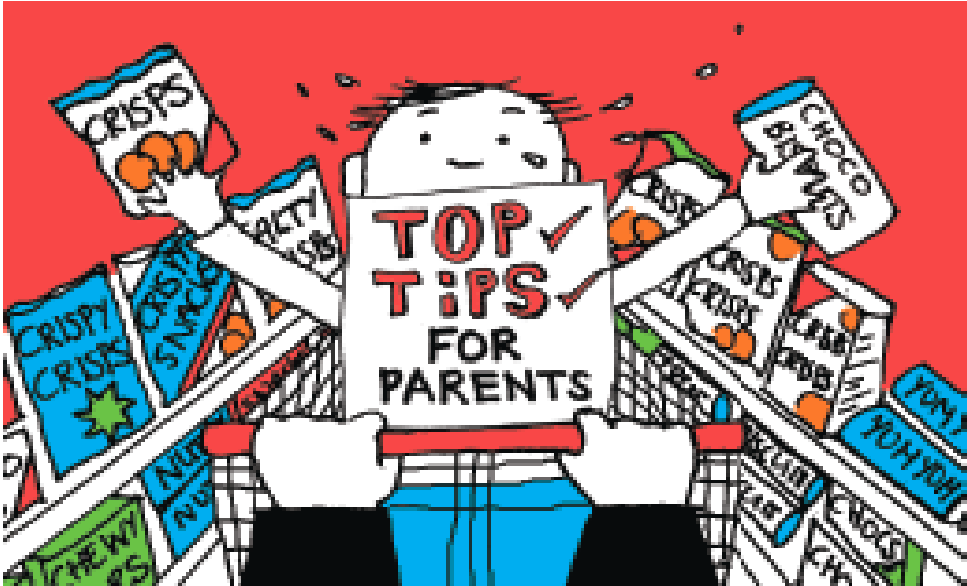
Representing consumers and working with others

- Examples include:
 - > meetings with retailers and manufacturers
 - > UK's Nutrition Strategy Steering Group
 - > EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (as part of BEUC)
 - > UK Department of Health Food and Drink Advertising and Promotion Forum

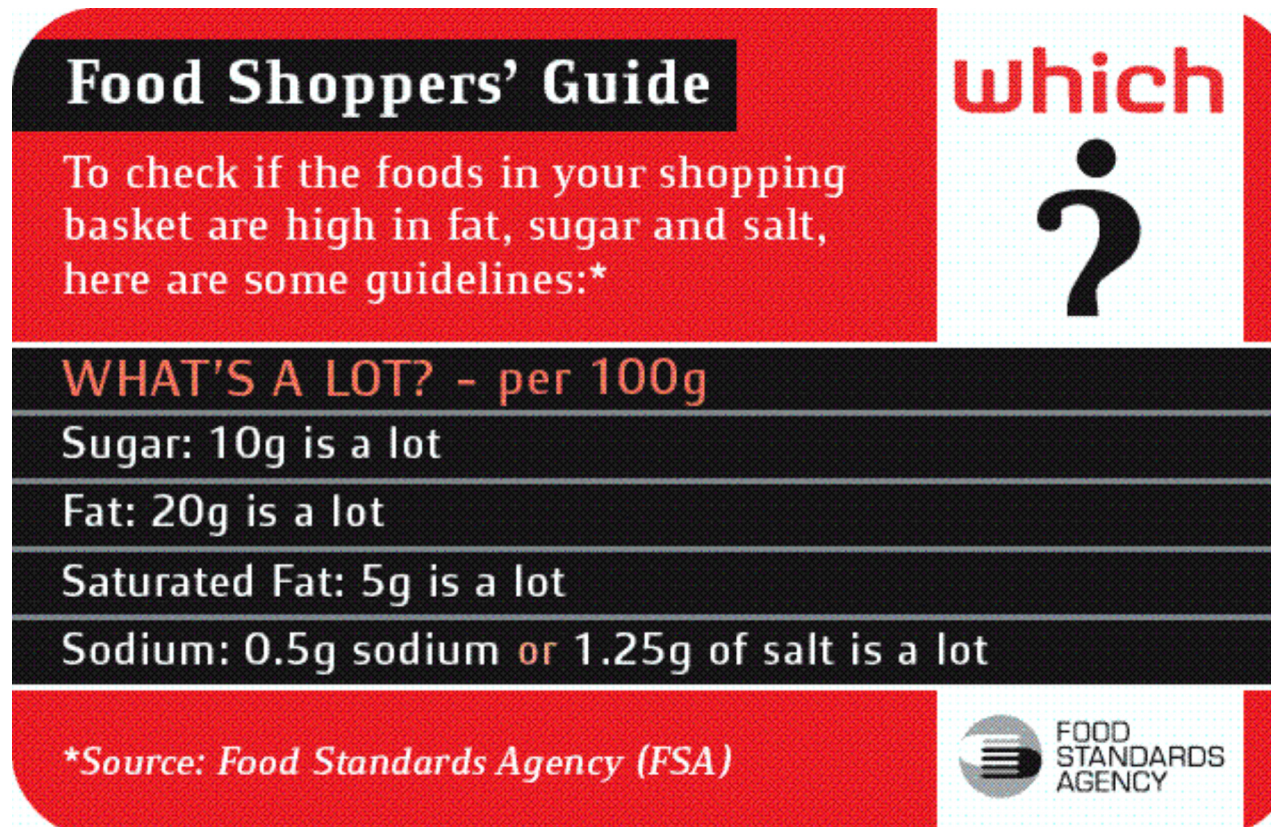
Example: marketing of HFSS foods to children
Representing consumers and working with others



Example: marketing of unhealthy food to children
Helping consumers take action



Example: Marketing of unhealthy food to children
Helping consumers take action




Food Shoppers' Guide


To check if the foods in your shopping basket are high in fat, sugar and salt, here are some guidelines:*

WHAT'S A LOT? - per 100g

- Sugar: 10g is a lot
- Fat: 20g is a lot
- Saturated Fat: 5g is a lot
- Sodium: 0.5g sodium or 1.25g of salt is a lot

*Source: Food Standards Agency (FSA)

which


 **FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY**



Example: Marketing of unhealthy foods to children

Helping consumers take action

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window. The address bar displays the URL: http://www.which.co.uk/reports_and_campaigns/food_and_drink/campaigns/kids_food/join_the_campaign/Join_kidsfood_560_64579.jsp. The page title is "Kids' food | Join the campaign - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by Which? Ltd.". The browser's menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Favorites, Tools, and Help. The toolbar contains navigation buttons (Back, Forward, Stop, Home, Refresh), a search box, and other utility icons. The page content is divided into several sections:

- Left sidebar:** A navigation menu with categories such as "Cars", "Computers & internet", "Consumer rights", "Food & drink" (with sub-items like News, Reports, Diet, nutrition & safety, Eating & drinking, Labelling & shopping), "Campaigns" (with sub-items like Regulation and safety, GM food, Kids' food, Nutrition and labelling), "Gardening", "Health & wellbeing", "House & home", "Money", "Travel & leisure", and "Quick access" (with sub-items like Which? campaigns, View all magazines, View all books, News, Win a Best Buy).
- Main content area:**
 - Header:** "Which? Campaigns : Join the campaign" and "Join the campaign".
 - Take action:** A green banner with a megaphone icon and the text "Submit your story".
 - Step 1 > Complete!** A section with instructions: "Fill in the form below to show your support for our campaign to stop the marketing of unhealthy foods to children." and "You can share your opinions and experiences too: with your consent, we may publish your stories on the site." It also includes a link to the "privacy policy" and a note: "* denotes a mandatory field."
 - Form:** A registration form with the following fields:
 - Checkbox: "Yes I support the campaign to stop irresponsible marketing of unhealthy foods to children." (checked).
 - Text input: "First name:*"
 - Text input: "Surname:*"
 - Text input: "Town/Area:*"
 - Text input: "Email address:*"
- Right sidebar:** Promotional banners for "Which? Online 30 day free trial", "Which? magazines TRIAL OFFER", and "Which? magazine" with sub-items like "Gardening Which?", "Holiday Which?", and "Computing Which?".

November 12, 2006

Role of public-private partnerships

- Important that different interests share and understand each others' perspectives
- Have seen some areas in UK where voluntary agreements have resulted in action eg. salt reduction work - led by Government
- Other areas are more controversial - opportunities for self or co-regulation have made little progress to date (eg. marketing)
- Difficult to reach common agreement in such a competitive environment (eg. labelling, healthy eating messages)
- Legislation will therefore be needed



Conclusion

- Europe is facing a crisis of obesity and other diet-related diseases
- The food industry as a whole must accept its role in prevention and in health promotion
- Consumer organisations have traditionally played a key role providing nutrition information - and are now stepping up their activities
- We are always willing to engage with Government and with industry where the dialogue is genuine
- A key part of our work will always be to provide independent information to consumers about industry practices in order to help drive up standards and make healthy choices easier