

The consumer and a healthy diet

- a UK consumer organisation perspective

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**Consumers'
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The consumer and a healthy diet

- The extent of the problem
- Recent government initiatives
- What consumers are eating compared to dietary recommendations
- Focus of CA's work
- Issues to be addressed

The extent of the problem

- One in every three people will develop cancer at some time in their life
 - It is estimated that a third of all cancers are diet-related
- One in every four men die from coronary heart disease (CHD) and one in every six women
 - Up to 30 per cent of these are down to unhealthy diets.

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The extent of the problem

- 21 per cent of men and 23.5 per cent of women are obese
- 17 per cent of men and 21 per cent of women were obese in 1998
- over half of women and about two-thirds of men are either over-weight or obese
- 8.5 per cent of 6 year olds and 15 per cent of 15 year olds are obese
- Diabetes is the third most common long-term disease in the UK after heart disease and cancer.

Government initiatives

- Scottish Diet Action Plan adopted in 1996, 'Tsar' appointed and a healthy eating campaign launched in January 2003
- Nutrition Strategy for Wales published February 2003
- Department of Health 'Five a day' programme and national school fruit scheme (by 2004)
- Food Standards Agency nutrition action plan
- Committed to a Food and Health Action Plan for England

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Food and health action plan

- ‘ A comprehensive and clear statement of government policy, activities and intent for bringing about a healthier diet for the people of England’
- A commitment to support and influence through partnership with industry and consumers:
 - *the production, manufacture and preparation of healthier food*
 - *the ease with which consumers are able to purchase or obtain the range of foods needed for a healthy diet; and*
 - *the provision of information to consumers about healthy eating and nutrition, and the acquisition of skills and behaviour necessary for good nutrition*

Key dietary recommendations	Average household consumption (NFS 2000)	Average intakes in British adults 1986/87 (NDNS 1990)
Total fat <i>- reduce to 35% energy</i>	36.5%	40%
Saturated fat <i>- reduce to no more than 11% energy</i>	14.5%	16%
N-3 PUFAs <i>- increase long chain n-3 PUFA to 0.2g/day (1.5g/week)</i>		0.1g
Total carbohydrate <i>- increase to approximately 50% energy</i>	47.6%	45%
Sugars (added) <i>- no more than 11% energy per day</i>		13%
Dietary fibre <i>- increase in non-starch polysaccharides to 18g per day</i>	12.7g per day	12g per day
Salt <i>- reduce to no more than 6g salt per day</i>		9g per day
Increase fruit and vegetable consumption <i>to at least 5 portions per day (2800g/week or 400g/day)</i>	2197g/week	1724g/week

CA 'School Dinners' report

- Children loved pizza and chips and disliked salad and vegetables
- They ate hardly any fruit or vegetables - children aged 10 to 11 and girls aged 14 to 15 ate just 2 portions a day on average, older boys ate 1.5.
- Most children ate at least one bag of crisps a day and many had sweets or chocolate every day
- Cheap meat products such as chicken nuggets and meat pasties appeared frequently in diaries.

Examples of work by CA

- Consumer advice on how to eat more healthily eg. Step by step healthier eating (W? Nov 2001)
- Nutritional requirements for specific groups eg. Staying healthy as you age (HW? Oct 2000);
- Advice on healthy choices within a particular product range eg. Budget brands (HW? Feb 2002)
- Sources of information about healthy eating eg. Nutritional therapy (HW? April 2000)
- Food industry trends/ new product development eg. functional foods, food supplements.

Examples of work by CA

- Nutritional quality of institutional catering eg. School meals (W? 2003)
- Key trends/ public health policy issues eg. Obesity; food poverty
- Broader food policy issues that impact on nutrition eg. A National Food Agency policy report 1997; Setting aside the CAP policy report 2002.
- Food labelling eg. Food labels – the hidden truth 2002/3.

Issues to be addressed include:

- Clear government messages
- Consistent and co-ordinated approach across government
- Influencing behaviour/ culture
- Food marketing methods
 - nutrition and health claims
 - healthy eating ranges
 - food advertising - particularly to children
 - functional and fortified foods

Issues to be addressed include:

- Product development - action by industry
- Nutrition labelling
- Food skills
- Food in schools
 - national curriculum
 - school meals
 - promotions eg. collector schemes
- Agriculture policy
 - shift to a consumer-focused food policy