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# SALUX e-Magazine

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**SALUX** project has been submitted in the framework of the call for proposals 2010 of the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers, therefore it is perfectly in line with EU strategies in the field of nutrition and reformulation of manufactured food. In particular, it aims to promote and support the implementation of the "White Paper on a Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity" that claims for the involvement of a wide range of actors in the fight to the obesity epidemic.

**SALUX** project aims to follow-up the reformulation of the manufactured foods in order to promote **healthier ways of life** and **reduce major diseases and injuries**, assisting citizens nutrition through working in tight contact with SMEs, food industries associations, consumers associations, public authorities and NGOs coming mainly from the 12 EU Member States participating in the project: Italy, Finland, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Germany, Romania, UK, France, Slovenia, Austria, Hungary and Spain.



## **Aim of the document**

A document containing the main results of **SALUX**, to be disseminated to the general public and transferred to National Authorities and SMEs of the food sector with the aim of raising awareness on the one side and improving the impact of reformulation of manufactured food from the other side.

## **Recommendations from the project officer after the final meeting:**

- 1) Regarding the manifesto that was presented at the final meeting, please:
  - a. ... make clear messages which derive from consolidating the results of your project;
  - b. ... make them easy to understand for non-insiders as well;
  - c. ... include statements only, which can be proven by the results of your project (avoiding subjective personal opinions);
  - d. ... link the manifesto statements to a more detailed outline of your results.
- 2) Please focus on a wide dissemination until the end of the project, involving the methodology and target groups as outlined in the Grant Agreement. Please give in the final report and account of the dissemination activities and their outreach achieved.

## **Acknowledgments**

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The external experts are acknowledged for their assistance and accurate suggestions that helped to successfully manage the project.

All the stakeholders identified during the **SALUX** project and the experts involved in the focus groups at national level are acknowledged for their collaboration, that allowed to address the project activities and to get feedbacks from the “real” world.

## Introduction

Europe is immersed in globalization and fast changing lifestyles, a deterioration of eating habits and a decrease of physical activity. Improving the nutritional status of the population is in beginning of the 21st century, a major challenge for public health policies conducted in Europe and worldwide. Adequate nutrition is a protective factor for health.

The advances researches have specified the role performed by inadequate dietary intake and the lack of physical activity in the determination of many cancers diseases in particularly obesity which presents a huge financial cost for all Europe.

Among the major reason for high caloric intake, massive efforts by food manufacturers to encourage people to buy their brands must undoubtedly play a role. Promotions, pricing, packaging and availability all encourage European people to eat unhealthier food high in fat salt and sugar.

Food manufacturers are well involved to react by improving their offerings and support the authorities in their efforts.

The pandemic rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases is cause of global concern. NCDs usually arise from lifestyle-related risk factors such as tobacco use, physical inactivity, alcohol consumption and unhealthy diets. Consequently NCDs are often labelled "lifestyle diseases" or "choice diseases".

Negative health effects of diets rich in salt, sugar, trans-fatty acids (TFAs) and fat have been discussed for a long time. Since especially processed foods are rich in these substances, food reformulation in order to reduce salt levels, eliminate industrially produced trans-fatty acids, decrease saturated fats and limit free sugars is one of the key options to improve the quality of population diets

The Commission White Paper of 30 May 2007 on a Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues noted that private actors can contribute in making the healthy option available and affordable. "The food industry (from producers to retailers) could make demonstrable improvements in areas such as the reformulation of foods in terms of salt, fats, particularly saturated and trans fats, and sugars for consumers across the EU and to consider ways to promote consumer acceptance of reformulated products" - indicates the White Paper. Nutrition recommendations for population and individuals can be implemented through healthy and wholesome diet with a focus on the types of products consumed and on the size of portions. This can be largely achieved through the choice of reformulated food.

**SALUX Manifesto - Key findings of the project in a nutshell....**

# 1. The European situation on food reformulation in the context of the F&D industry and of the institutions:

**“The reformulation of food to reduce salt/sugar/fats to benefit consumer health is a process encouraged by the authorities and supported by the research community; this process is a complex challenge for the food industry as different aims in terms of technological, sensory and safety aspects have to be met”**

## The context

In today's fast-developing society, changing eating habits and increasingly sedentary lifestyles have contributed to growing levels of obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in the European and global population.

Diet-related illnesses are a major concern in all countries involved in **SALUX** project. From populations in the Southern Europe, traditionally prone to a healthy Mediterranean diet, to those in the North, accustomed to high animal origin food diets, or from people in the West, familiar with foods high in saturated fat, to those in the East, well-known for their salty and fatty foods, all register high morbidity and mortality rates from nutrition-related non-communicable illnesses.

In this context and - to certain extent - exhorted by the EU and WHO, **country governments** have developed health and nutrition action plans to reduce incidence of such diseases. At least one Plan or Programme on Food/Nutrition and Health was implemented in every country and several (six) national plans/programs are related to levels of salt, fat, sugar (SFS) in food products or the amounts of SFS intake in population. Reformulation of foods in the sense of reducing the content of salt, fat and sugar was included in nutrition action plans of all countries which sought the involvement of the food industry in the process.

Current legislation in the field is referring to dietary food compounds (ex. trans fatty acids); schoolchildren healthy food; salt, fat and sugar content labelling or prevention of healthy risks.

Food reformulation is not directly addressed in food legislation and hence there is no official definition available for food reformulation. In an overall context of healthier food choices, food reformulation is a form of technical change which involves new recipes for reducing certain product ingredients (salt, fat and/or sugar) while maintaining characteristics such as flavor, texture and shelf-life. Some main reasons for food reformulations are:

- development of healthier food products
- improvement of the flavor (enhance consumers' perceptions)
- follow - ups of national or international law or recommendations.

Based on the white paper entitled “**A Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity**”, the EU Framework for National Salt Initiatives was developed. It describes a common vision for a general European approach towards salt reduction and provides support to member states in the implementation of reformulation schemes. The National Salt Initiatives were developed in several countries, based on some national strategies focussed on a particular food industry and industry connected, involving the HoReCa sector as well.

Due to the EU framework for national action on salt reduction, ongoing reformulation initiatives across Europe focus on salt in most countries, whilst trans fats and sugar are tackled only in some European states.

The benefit of food reformulation is intensely debated among various stakeholders as the incriminated nutrients act as vectors for some essential nutrients (e.g. salt and iodine, fat and fat soluble vitamins or polyunsaturated fatty acids), or due to safety aspects risen by reformulation.

#### SALUX outcomes

Organizations that support food reformulation at national level are generally ministries, agencies, research community and NGOs. For food industry the reformulation is a complex challenge.

- National **Authorities**, particularly Ministries of Health, recommend reductions in intake of salt, fat and sugars for a balanced healthy diet, as well as a healthy life-style. They encouraged the implementation of food reformulation process in their countries and applied some measures related to this issue. In this sense, voluntary agreements between authorities and food business operators, represented by Food industry federations, have been signed. Thus, in the last 5 years over 10 such voluntary agreements were signed. Ongoing salt content reformulation schemes are laid down a reduction of salt with about 15-20% and for sugar and fat content the reduction was done up to around 25%.

- **Research community** supports the process of food reformulation and needs to focus on ensuring the safety and consumer acceptability of solutions to reduce salt, sugar and fats levels. More knowledge is necessary to reformulate food products and a close collaboration between research community and industry is needed and this needs appropriate funding mechanisms, as well. Food reformulation encourages innovation in food industry and direct involvement of industry in research, as a way to drive innovation in the food sector.

- **The food industry** is generally aware of importance of food reformulation for consumer's health and recognizes this issue. It strives to improve the nutritional value towards a healthier formulation of food by reducing ingredients such as saturated fat, salt and sugar in many of its products. Larger companies are the first movers in this direction, and the Professional Associations play a leading role in supporting the process.

**Food industry federations** and professional associations in different EU countries have different opinions about food reformulation and they fulfil various related activities, but generally they are active in promoting food reformulation among their associated companies.

The most relevant food reformulation actions are those taken by the bakery industry, for salt reduction in most of the partner countries.

There are also other food reformulation actions related to reduction of salt, fat and sugar contents carried out by several food industry sub-sectors, which led in the last years to a wide variety of products available on the markets. Actions in the sector of meat products are to be highlighted.

- The **main** identified **barriers** for food reformulation from the point of view of the industry are:

- **loss of sensorial properties** (smell, flavour, taste or texture) of reformulated foods
- **quality and safety constraints** that might be lowered by ingredient reduction or substitution; requirement of a higher **use of additives** as substitutes for SFS
- **higher costs of production** of reformulated products;
- the presence of numerous **protected productions**, which have to be produced following mandatory rules and do not allow any space of reformulation;
- lack of an updated **legislation**.
- **lack of scientific knowledge among SMEs** on the consequences of SFS reduction and about food reformulation (confusion in using terms correctly), but also **lack of technological competences** regarding new requirements (e.g. trans fatty acids)

Successful implementation of food reformulation requires additional costs (research, tests, laboratory analyses, packaging, labelling, staff training, etc) which many SMEs cannot afford. The analysis of the local context concluded that large companies can easier support the costs of the reformulation process, while for SMEs, which represent over 90% from the total number of food companies at European level, the implementation of the process is much more difficult. At the same time, SMEs are regional niche players and as a consequence, they can adapt fast to the changing market needs (they produce a large variety of products, but in small quantities). New low fat/sugar/salt products could stimulate SMEs business. This is an opportunity to increase their market share and gain knowledge. SMEs can also use some marketing tools to stimulate consumers to buy reformulated/healthy products.

The implementation of food reformulation should start with education of peo-

ple and this issue could be an important task of NGOs, particularly of **consumers associations**.

The cultural food values of the European countries involved in the project highlighted a diversity of diets, eating habits and culinary traditions, leading to different impacts on food reformulation.

The consumers have no control over changes to the products they like and have a poor understanding of what a balanced diet consists of. Consumers often do not understand the labels information and there is lack of information when eating out/ buying from small producers, no calorie or labels to inform them.

Some consumer associations and organizations from EU countries are directly involved in activities generally related to healthy diet and particularly in food reformulation.

**The consumer associations'** support is primarily related to raising awareness among consumers, advising and assisting the people to choose a healthy diet through:

- performing studies and elaborating reports on food reformulation;
- producing guides, leaflets, brochures on healthy foods)
- launching campaign and projects to educate groups of consumers on food reformulation

Information and education of citizens should start in early life (beginning with the kindergarten) for a healthier life. This will lead to improve the national health status in the different age groups, but also the increasing demands for healthy products.

## 2. How the European F&D industry perceived food reformulation:

### “European SMEs and food reformulation - Lone travellers on a challenging mission towards healthier foods and a healthier society”

#### The context

One fundamental aspect of the EC strategy to reduce salt, sugar, trans-fat and total fat in the diet is the strong involvement of private actors such as the food industry. Over the past few years many national campaigns on food reformulation sprung up in EU member states. Governmental agencies in most European countries have adopted national salt reduction initiatives. TFA bans have been enforced on the national level by governments in Austria, Denmark and Switzerland. Following a recent WHO draft guideline, suggesting that sugar intake should stay below 5% of total energy uptake, governmental efforts are increasingly paying attention to high levels of sugar intake. However, data especially on SME related reformulation activities is scarce. Hence, WP 6 of the EU financed project “**SALUX**” (Agreement Number – 2010 12 10) conducted a follow-up on the reformulation of food among SMEs in all partner countries (Italy, Spain, England, Germany, France, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia, Finland, Romania, Austria). The overall aim of this survey was to build a better understanding of SME issues and concerns pertaining the reduction of salt, saturated fats, trans fats or sugars in manufactured food. To this end **SALUX** invited 6722 European SMEs to respond to an online based questionnaire.

#### SALUX outcomes

In total, 587 companies submitted valid replies on questions about overall activities, implementation, consequences and drawbacks related to the reformulation of food.

Of the companies that responded to the survey 45% liked and 7% disliked the idea of removing or reducing certain food components in order to improve population health. Companies which had already succeeded in reformulating one or more products generally showed a more positive attitude towards reformulation than those companies which had failed or had not consider food reformulation. Almost half the companies had successfully carried out one or more reformulations, while 49 companies (=8%) tried to reformulate a product, but failed in doing so. The remaining 259 companies (=44%) did not take any measures regarding food reformulation.

Bakery wares, meat products, dairy products, confectionary and prepared foods were the categories most frequently reformulated . Together these categories accounted for about 2/3rds of the reported reformulations. The vast majority of companies started food reformulation on a voluntary base. Only 5% of the companies had been forced to reformulate certain products in

order to comply with legal requirements. Mandatory food reformulation concerned prepared foods, meat products and bakery wares to almost the same extent and were mainly required in Lithuania, Austria, France and Slovenia.

Most companies stated that salt reduction was the prior aim, closely followed by sugar reduction and fat reduction. Only 15.3% of responding companies aimed at a reduction of TFAs. Bakery wares, meat products and prepared foods were mainly reformulated in order to lower levels of salt, whereas sugar reduction was the main in terms of confectionary and fat reduction in terms of dairy products. 63% of all responding companies achieved the intended reformulation in a single step, indicating that the often acclaimed "stealth approach" (meaning a step-wise modification) may be less common than expected. Novel technological approaches have been rarely used to lower levels of salt, fat, sugar, TFA or SAFAs. Most frequently food reformulation activities were accompanied by sensory tests, bench top reformulation small scale tests and monitoring of consumer responses. Almost a third of responding companies believed that the reformulated recipe ultimately led to an increase in product quality. Substantial economic gain or loss connected to the adaptation of recipes has been reported only by few companies. Changes in food labelling, minor technological adaptations in the production process, an adapted marketing strategy and increasing product prices have been the most common implications of food reformulations.

The main reasons why companies faced difficulties in implementing food reformulations or even failed in doing so were linked to sensory issues. Other relevant aspects that hampered food reformulation were of technological or economic nature. In terms of sensory aspects it was reported that inferior organoleptic characteristics and concerns over lowered consumer acceptance were the main reasons why food reformulations failed or why they were not started in the beginning. Most safety related problems concerned a shorter shelf life as a consequence of salt reduction. Technological difficulties that were reported to hamper food reformulation included processing characteristics, product characteristics, difficulties in adapting the processing parameters and a general lack of know-how. Increased production costs were the main economic reason why companies failed in food reformulation. It was also reported that retailers are looking for cheap products and that they often are not willing to list reformulated products. Some companies stated that reformulation of certain food categories (e.g. confectionary products) is simply not possible due to legal compositional requirements which are too restrictive to allow any meaningful reduction.

Over 75% of the companies implemented the intended reformulation without any help from outsiders. In the remaining cases external support was received, and of these respondents the vast majority were satisfied with the services provided by supportive institutions.

In conclusion, food reformulation, initially started by large scale industry in

the 1990s, has now spread to SMEs probably as a consequence of a string of international initiatives that try to curb NCDs. According to the data obtained, the majority of food producers are aware of the topic and actively trying to improve the individual properties of food. However, food producers often claimed an insufficient cooperation among the different stakeholders. Most reformulations have been implemented without any external support. At the same time complaints about lacking organizational and financial supports were raised. Further it was claimed that a lack of knowledge is hampering food reformulations. Part of this problem may be attributed to the fact that the European food sector is highly competitive and that most details on successful food reformulations remain largely confidential and that the knowledge transfer between research and SMEs is not working. Cooperation with raw material suppliers and the commitment from retailers were both questioned by some companies. All these data suggest that food producers in Europe might need additional support from different stakeholders in order to meet the challenges imposed by food reformulation initiatives.

### 3. Good practices in food reformulation:

**“Exchange of good practices (including campaigns) is an efficient tool for promoting food reformulation. Clarification about the definition of reformulated food as to distinguish it from other food categories (such as fortified food, functional food etc.) is needed to help all stakeholders understanding the same concept and compare their reformulating practices”**

#### The context

Reformulation of manufactured foods, analysis of the EU context and identification and exchange of the best practices in terms of reducing the levels of salt, fat and sugar in food products and information campaigns for consumers aims to support the follow-up of the implementation of the EC White Paper.

There is no common definition on food reformulation and good practice in food reformulation. Scientists, Competent Authorities, agencies, NGOs, consumers have different understanding of good practice in food reformulation and the definitions cover different aspects of food reformulation in different countries.

Reformulated products should retain taste, texture, appearance, functionality, safety, shelf life, price etc. in a context of a good nutritional profile. Replacement of reduced ingredients by other ingredients or changes in technology should not compromise health benefits of reformulated products.

Food reformulation for food industry is also a technological challenge. Knowledge, innovative technologies, research is needed to reformulate food.

The aim of this work package was to gather information on examples of good practice in food reformulation in each of the partner countries .

Manufacture of reformulated food is supported by different activities promoting food reformulation.

**Consumer acceptance** is a major issue considering food reformulation. The main goal of the food reformulation is to produce healthier food as to satisfy needs of the consumer. Wholesome food is very important aspect of the food market and contributes significantly to the health and well-being of citizens. Reformulation of products should keep sensory parameters equivalent to similar non-reformulated food.

#### SALUX outcomes

Experience in food reformulation all around the Europe is different. There are many national programmes, initiatives of the food business going on to promote reformulation and encourage production and consumption of reformulated food.

All Partners have been actively involved in discussions on the development

of the proposed definition and they presented valuable comments. The final definition was agreed by Partners as follows:

**Good practice in food reformulation aimed at reducing saturated and trans fat, salt, sugar is defined as activities that significantly contribute to a healthy diet for target population and do not compromise the safety, acceptability or the nutritional profile of the product.**

Reformulation of food products is in most cases initiated by the manufacturer. The new recipes were developed by manufacturers in order to contribute to healthier diet of their customers and intended to raise consumers' awareness of healthy eating behaviours.

Countries have various experiences in promotion of food reformulation. The means to promote and introduce food reformulation, which are indicated most frequently, are the following:

- National programmes introduced by the government;
- Projects by food sector organisations;
- Legislation;
- Initiatives of individual food business operators.

To have a significant effect, the reformulated products should be intended for daily consumption. Reformulated product should be competitive to similar non-reformulated products on the market as regards price and organoleptic properties. Activities at the national level are recommended as an important tool raising awareness and encouraging manufacture and consumption of reformulated food and should preferably involve food manufacturers. Repeated activities promoting food reformulation and combination of different measures taking into account target population, promotion of food reformulation which is related to all foods and also includes other elements of healthy behaviour are recommended.

## 4. How cost issues in food reformulation can be tackled:

**“Food reformulation: a complex process involving a great number of variables and significant costs. Specific tools can lead to a systematic approach, allowing SMEs to manage the complexity and to save time and money”**

### The context

Food reformulation is a challenging activity for the agrifood SMEs. The term “reformulation” covers a process consisting of several phases, subjected to strict constraints and involving a wide number of variables. The economic risks are clear but extremely difficult to be quantified, and success is in many cases uncertain. The way this process is managed constitutes the Company strategy to carry out the reformulation.

What are the costs of carrying out a food reformulation process? Which are variables influence the cost of any food reformulation process? How do these variables affect the costs? How do the SMEs approach the reformulation of any of their products? Are they completely aware of all the variables and their impact on the costs? Do they plan accurately a strategy before jumping into research, experiments and trials to modify the original recipe towards an healthier one? How would it be possible to raise the awareness of the SMEs about all the aspects of the process of food reformulation, without discouraging them from trying to approach the reformulation of their products? Is there any strategic tool available to support the management in its decision regarding the approach to product reformulation? Which kind of additional tool could be useful for the scope? Which characteristics should this tool have?

This set of questions was the starting point of the activities carried out in project **SALUX** WP7.

### SALUX outcomes

To estimate the costs of reformulating a product, it was necessary to have a reference model of the process. After reviewing relevant literature, it has been decided to develop an independent model to help SMEs to appraise the costs that each of them is likely to encounter in carrying out the reformulation of one of its product. The goal was to have a simple but complete tool that is easy to use and that could help the Companies to approach the reformulation more strategically. It had to be drafted from the perspective of the SMEs. The model also aimed at raising awareness of all the aspects involved in reformulation, particularly those not immediately evident at the very start, when the company starts considering the opportunity to reformulate one of its products.

The structure of the entire reformulation process has been broken down into a descriptive model, consisting of 5 main phases, in order to simplify its comprehension and make it easier to handle. These phases come in the same or-

der as any Company approaching food reformulation would encounter them:

1. Idea generation and research
2. Set up and testing of the reformulated product (to assess the practical feasibility of the results of the first phase and to test the characteristics of the reformulated product)
3. Engineering and implementation (of the modifications necessary to implement the production process of the reformulated product)
4. Commercial launch of the reformulated product
5. Project management (indeed, this phase runs across the other 4 phases)

The developed model describes the phases in detail and highlights the costs each phase entail. The model also takes into account factors that influence these costs such as the extent of the intended reformulation, context of the reformulation, time available, internal skills and facilities available.

The "Short Guidebook on Food Reformulation"

The information behind the model has been compiled into a short guidebook, to be made easily available to the SMEs. The guidebook describes in plain language the phases of the process, the variables influencing the costs and, through simple and direct questions, tries to stimulate the reflection. It is intended to be read by the decision makers or by the persons in charge to handle a food reformulation process within and agrifood SMEs and anyone else who is interested. The goal of the manual is to turn people thinking at the food reformulation in a strategic manner.

The "Cost Evaluation Tool"

The Cost Evaluation Tool consists of a multiple answer questionnaire that runs in MS Excel®. It is simple to fill in and returns an estimated budget allocation in the form of percentages of the whole amount to be spent for each of the five phases of the reformulation. It is also possible to observe how changes to the strategy affect the budget allocation. Then having the knowledge of the costs entailed by one of the phases, the tool can calculate the total costs related to a given reformulation process carried out with a given strategy.

Conclusions

Just like the success of the reformulation, at the very beginning of the process the costs lie in the land of uncertainty. A non-systematic approach can easily lead to poor results and entail loss of time and money.

Moreover, it may be extremely difficult to recover the situation caused by inaccurate planning. Awareness of process of food reformulation, including all the phases and factors involved, can make the process manageable for the SME with a structured strategic approach. If necessary, through recurring to external help, is fundamental.

## 5. How to efficiently communicate about food reformulation:

**“Authorities have a major role in educating the consumers and in raising the awareness of the technical support available to companies to facilitate food reformulation”**

### The context

Generally and according to the consumer, there are two possible relationships between health and diet. Either they believe that certain foods help to reduce the risk of developing certain diseases such as cancer, vascular disease and osteoporosis or they feel that food can cause certain diseases such as allergies and, especially in recent years, obesity and its complications. For many people, obesity is due to manufactured food being too high in sugar, salt and fat.

Today's consumers are worried and acceptance of healthy products is growing and they pay more attention to the quality of their food and their health impacts. Health crises in recent years and the negative media information on the nutritional quality and misleading information about products increased their fear. The population expressed so strongly the need to refer to standards and nutrient quotas. This alarming situation has pushed governments to quickly respond to these challenges by putting in place strict new regulations on labeling and nutrition claims as well as awareness campaign which is very active in educating consumers.

At present, although significant progress has been made by the authorities and the food industry at both national and European levels, the consumer is not well informed. Faced with the arrival on the market of new products, consumers are not able to properly assess the exact composition and therefore the potential risks involved.

The reformulation of food products is a tangible way to improve the nutritional profile and deal with these health problems. Unfortunately today, consumers are not convinced of the industry motivation for the interest of this product reformulation and the consumer does not know who to trust. Governments, the agri-food sector and the media have all contributed to this consumer concern.

To get this confidence shaken consumer will require patient work of information by all available means and take this issue into account in developing the communications strategy established by the authorities and the manufacturer. When communication of both parties coincides and progresses in the same direction, it can help to concretely change dietary behavior. The communication needs to be clear, specific and should not overwhelm the consumer. With incomprehensible information

### SALUX outcomes

- **Strategic communication portal: SALUX clearing house**

Governments, consumers and industry should strive together to solve these issues by considering the needs of each party. To facilitate exchanges and opinions, **SALUX** set up a clearinghouse to discuss the reformulation of foods. This platform is a good starting point to find information relating to reformulation (<http://www.salux-project.eu/sez/clearinghouse>).

The Clearing House allows the boundaries between these actors and increase direct information exchange.

Salt, fat and sugar have technical roles in many foods that require the utilization of alternative strategies to substitute the function. These strategies can sometimes run counter to consumer desire for 'clean labels'. Many consumers consider these substitutes (e.g. preservatives) as 'unnatural'. Effective communication of the technological role of ingredients and the safety and necessity of additives could allow manufacturers to answer consumer concerns about reformulated products

The Clearing House offers immediate and free access to information on food reformulation and is an efficient way for SMEs to find information on reformulation. Technical expertise in ingredients, processing, safety and labelling are available from technical consultants, universities and food research organisations.

The clearing house hosts three important parts:

- a specialized Forum fundamental to review and discuss initiatives, policies and programs aiming at reformulating food;
- the current state of knowledge regarding **SALUX** issues;
- the effectiveness and CEA (Cost effectiveness analysis) of interventions on fat, sugar and salt, and how to evaluate and monitor industry attitudes (follow-up).

Information on the existence of this platform mail was sent to 1341 relevant stakeholders including SMEs and public bodies in the health and agri-food sector. An invitation to join this platform is planned for The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) which is very active with the European Union. These consumer organizations have a very important role in educating consumers by making available all relevant and understandable information (scientific, economic and regulatory) on reformulated foods.

#### - **Changing eating habits tomorrow by communication**

Although children are currently most affected by obesity, they have a good perception of food in general. They are very aware of the nutritional problems so they can become influencers for their parents.

Developing good eating habits at a young age is seen as an important way to reduce long-term risks of obesity and non-communicable diseases related to

nutrition. Indeed, the way we eat when we are children may strongly affect our eating behaviors as adults. When we repeat these behaviors over many years, they become habits. They affect what we eat, when we eat, and how much we eat. If habits are not proper, the consequences are health disorders. Many people have a very hard time breaking these habits. Therefore it is very important to start with this problematic education early in the childhood.

In this path of educational communication, our partner in Slovenia has taken steps to educate this group of young consumers. They are developing a strategy to present the issues raised by the SALUX project to preschool children.



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