

UNILEVER'S POSITION ON TACKLING OBESITY



Background

Obesity has reached epidemic proportions. More than 1.9 billion adults – 39% of the global population – are overweight and 13% are obese. By the time they start school, over 40 million children will already be overweight or obese.

Key to the growth of obesity is the increasing urbanisation of populations, leading to more sedentary lifestyles and the associated imbalance between the amount of calories many people consume and the amount they expend. (Individual needs in energy intake differ depending on the amount a person burns. People who are active through increased physical activity need more energy, whereas, those with a sedentary lifestyle need less. The average energy requirement for a sedentary adult woman is 2000 kilocalories per day.)

Obesity is now the fifth largest cause of death, with 2.8 million people dying each year as a result. Prevalence has more than doubled since 1980 and it is still rising. It is no longer just a disease of higher-income countries but is also an increasing problem in low- and middle income nations. Yet, obesity is largely preventable.

Context

The obesity epidemic must be addressed. There is no one solution but evidence shows that solutions need to be holistic and take a multi-stakeholder approach with governments, NGOs, academics, civil society and business working together to deliver a robust programme of interventions at country level. Such interventions range from public health education and lower calorie food products to healthier meals in schools and workplaces and promotion of increased physical activity. Food producers like Unilever have an important role to play but they cannot solve this global challenge alone.

Unilever's position

As one of the world's largest food producers, Unilever is committed to playing a part in helping to tackle obesity. We have a multi-faceted approach based on: reformulating our products, by reducing levels of sugar and calories in certain products; providing clear nutrition labelling, so that consumers can make informed food choices; encouraging better eating and offering greater choice to consumers, with lower calorie and calorie-free products and the promotion





of healthy lifestyles; responsible marketing for all ages but especially towards children, and encouraging the wider food industry to establish global best practice.

Reformulating our products

Nutrition is a core part of the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan and is embedded in our business strategy. We were one of the first companies to establish a global programme to limit the use of ingredients causing public health concern. For more than a decade we have been reducing levels of salt, trans and saturated fats, sugar and calories in our products.

In reducing sugar and calorie levels, we focus on ice creams and teas, as this is where we can make the most difference in terms of public health. However, we have introduced healthy product variants across our portfolio. We have achieved our target of reducing calories in our children's ice creams, 100% now contain no more than 110 kcals per portion. We are now working to reduce the energy levels in 80% of our packaged ice creams to less than 250 kilocalories per portion in every market. We will reduce the sugar levels in our ready-to-drink teas, powdered ice tea, milk tea mixes and concentrated teas by 25% by 2020. We will achieve this by reducing sugar in the core portfolio, with new innovations that are sugar reduced, and with varieties that contain no sugar. We have also launched low calorie ice tea powder mixes, ready-to drink ice teas and tea concentrates.

Consumer choice

We offer consumer choice by providing an increasing range of lower or zero calorie products across our foods and beverages. Around one fifth of our Spreads, Dressings, Ice Cream and Beverages portfolio¹, by volumes sold, is now available in light, low calorie, calorie-free or reduced size variants. These include smaller portions, such as Cornetto and Magnum Mini, and lower calorie alternatives, like Hellmann's Light (30% fat) and Extra Light (3% fat).

We harness innovation to offer more nutritious products, for example, using new cool blending recipes to make spreads with fewer calories. We also work with chefs and restaurant operators in many countries to demonstrate how they can produce tasty but lower calorie menus and dishes.

¹ This does not include products in our Savoury portfolio or Unilever Food Solutions products.





Clear labelling

Unilever has a global commitment to clear, simple nutrition labelling so that consumers can make informed choices about their diet.

All our products in Europe provide full nutritional information. By end 2015, this will be extended to all our products globally. Our labelling indicates the energy per portion on the front of each pack, with eight key nutrients and guideline daily amounts for five nutrients on the back.

Responsible marketing

Our global Food and Beverage Marketing Principles prohibit the use of any materials that undermine the promotion of healthy, balanced diets and healthy, active lifestyles. In addition, we restrict marketing of food and drink to children under 12 years old, unless the products meet our strict nutritional criteria.

We promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging consumers to eat better with communication campaigns that outline how our products fit into balanced diets and by highlighting healthy recipes that people can make at home.

Working with the wider food industry

We boost our impact by working with the wider foods industry to address obesity. As active members of the International Food and Beverage Alliance and the Consumer Goods Forum, we help drive progress on product formulation, responsible marketing to children, and nutrition campaigns.

