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Healthy food choice – a child’s play?

Abstract of stakeholder workshops from September 2012

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The Swiss Society for Nutrition SSN on behalf of the Federal Office of Public Health FOPH has held three half-day workshops in order to develop proposals with relevant stakeholders for action steps that can support consumers in Switzerland in their “healthy choice”.

The first workshop was held with representatives of the food industry, food trade and the economy. The second with representatives of consumer organisations. The third with experts from the fields of prevention, health promotion, public health, health policy, training, nutrition, consumer behaviour and communication. In order to generate as many ideas and proposals as possible in a relatively short time, the workshop methodology “World Café” was chosen.

A total of around 400 constructive and creative ideas and suggestions were compiled. There were many commonalities between the three groups of stakeholders. Differences were principally apparent in the diversity of ideas and less so in opposing positions.

All three groups of stakeholders, independently of each other, agreed on the following points:

- In general, black/white or healthy/unhealthy approaches were not wished for. What is/were the alternatives, however?
- The basis for a healthy diet is laid in childhood. The understanding of a healthy diet has to be promoted and communicated early on. Family, day care facilities for children, kindergartens and schools play an important role here.
- Health, nutrition and cooking (including education of the palate) are just as important as reading and writing and should therefore be taught as an obligatory subject at school.
- Healthy foods should be given a better place in shops. Best of all, instructions are needed in regard to where products may or should be placed in the shop and shelves.
- Motivate and animate consumers to healthy eating and cooking by means of cooking demonstrations, tastings as well as offering recipes.
- A healthy diet must be promoted in order to raise/improve the image of healthy nutrition. A healthy diet must become sexy and in.
- The public domain should be increasingly used for spreading information. For example public transport, railway stations, tram stations, lifts, wells etc.

In addition to the action steps, valuable advice to target groups, settings and information channels could be collected. The active participation in the workshops reflects the willingness and motivation of all participants to contribute to improve information to consumers.

After the workshops, there were discussions with focus groups to discuss selected ideas. These results will be published in a separate report.

More information on www.sge-ssn.ch/projekt-konsumenten or www.bag.admin.ch/lebensmittelwahl.