

Nutrition & Exercise – the right balance

Mars viewpoint on nutrition and food production.

Mars produces and markets some of the most well known food brands in the world, and is one of the world's leading manufacturers of chocolate bars. In this position Mars feels a special responsibility to be a leader not only in the market, but also in the public debate about nutrition.

Balance of enjoyment and health

Mars produces confectionery products that are part of everyday life for many people. They represent enjoyment and a zest for life that should be consumed responsibly. However, leading an active lifestyle is just as important for ensuring a healthy, balanced life. Research suggests that the majority of people are indeed aware of this. Nevertheless, illnesses caused by an imbalanced lifestyle are a growing trend in modern society. This raises the question of how people can best be helped to find the right balance in their lives.

Scientific studies in previous years have shown that to succeed in preventing such illnesses, all influencing factors must be considered equally. Eating habits and the social environment of a person are just as important as exposure to stress, sleeping patterns and willingness to get enough exercise. However, public discussion about prevention of obesity remains concentrated only on food issues. This results in rash conclusions to target certain food items as the main culprit of obesity.

This one-sided observation is not a solution. Only an approach that takes into account all influencing factors and one that includes all stakeholders can lead to success. For this reason Mars explicitly appreciates any approach that contributes to combining resources, coordinating stakeholders and developing integrated solutions.

Especially the “Platform for Good Nutrition and Physical Exercise” (*peb = Plattform Ernährung und Bewegung e. V.*) is an important tool for reaching this goal. This is why Mars is actively involved in bringing expertise and commitment for a balanced lifestyle to the platform. Of vital significance is that this differentiated and objective position is also being considered when forming any future national nutrition policy.

Commitment to transparency and responsibility

Nowadays, many people place a high value on a healthy diet. This must be reinforced and supported. Providing support for a healthy lifestyle means enabling and motivating people to act responsibly and use common sense. This can only be successful when government, society and business provide consumers with positive offerings instead of ostracising them with bans and limitations.

Therefore, Mars has initiated actions in the past months that provide consumers with better information for their purchasing decisions and to reinforce their decision competency.

- Mars has introduced comprehensive nutrition labelling for their products showing the amount of calories (energy) and the eight major nutrients in relation to the total recommended daily intake and portion size. This labelling provides consumers with orientation, but leaves it up to them to assess if the product is suitable for their individual lifestyle.
- This measure is complemented by the parent’s online portal “Clever-Naschen”. This is where parents can learn more about nutrition and physical activity, in addition with tips and expert advice on how to create a healthy lifestyle for their children.
- The brochure series “Clever Naschen Action Kids” published in cooperation with the *peb* and the German Youth Sports (DSJ = Deutsche Sportjugend) has a similar goal; providing exercise ideas for nine regions in Germany and encouraging parents to do more physical activity with their children.
- Under the headline “Akillica tatli yemenin sirlari” (clever snacking) Mars Chocolate has also been offering consumer information in the Turkish language since 2009; for instance, regional issues of the book series “Clever Naschen Action Kids” for Berlin

- and the Rhein-Main area are also in Turkish. Both issues were developed together with the Turkish-German Health Foundation (TDG e.V.). Direct access to the Turkish sub-site of www.clever-naschen.de is possible by entering www.acillica-tatli-yemenin-sirlari.de. Only a few clicks away are many exercise tips and ideas for spontaneous physical activities for the family as well as information about responsible snacking – and everything is in Turkish.
- Another focus in designing responsible consumer communication was to stop advertising directed at children under the age of 12. The objective is to strengthen the educational competence of parents. Therefore, Mars committed in its own marketing code to cease all marketing activities directly aimed at children below 12 years of age as of 2008.

Product innovations as a contribution towards prevention efforts

The growing trend towards more health awareness and the search for solutions on the issue of obesity are changing the product preferences of consumers, and therefore, the business development of food retailers.

Mars aims to be a driving force in this area and will continuously improve their offerings to consumers through a powerful research and innovation policy. As an example, the proportion of trans-fatty acids, which can contribute to a higher cholesterol level, has been reduced in their products to the minimum that is technically feasible.

Since 1 January 2008, Mars is using only barn eggs in their Snackfood Division and has completely eliminated battery eggs from their production.

Another target Mars aims for is to eliminate the use of additives as much as possible. Thus the popular chocolate bars Milky Way, Balisto, Mars and Snickers have been free of artificial flavouring, colouring and preservatives since 2008.

However, product reformulation also provides opportunities to optimize the food being offered in the market according to the latest health criteria. In 2002 Mars was already able to

reduce the content of trans-fatty acids in their products to the technically possible minimum of 0.5 percent. The percentage of saturated fatty acids in the chocolate products has also been significantly lowered. The three brands Mars, Snickers and Milky Way will be available in the trade as of summer 2010 with at least 15 percent less saturated fatty acids per bar. Excessive intake of trans-fatty acids and/or saturated fatty acids can adversely impact the blood lipid level and consequently increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

Research and innovation go hand-in-hand and contribute significantly to a health-conscious diet. That is why the cooperation of science and business must be strengthened and supported.

Actively designing the future

A turnaround towards a more balanced, healthy lifestyle is possible only when efforts are successful in convincing people to take personal responsibility for changing their habits. This requires long-term, holistic prevention instead of selective, restrictive measures. A national nutrition strategy should be aligned to these principles and implemented in a broad European approach.

Mars will continue its engagement in promoting healthy lifestyles in the future. The existing measures for promoting balanced nutrition and sufficient physical activity are to be continually reinforced. Beyond that, Mars will continue optimising its brands through an innovative product policy, e.g. by abandoning the use of trans-fats and additives, as well as reducing saturated fatty acids.