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### **FOOD SAFETY AND LABELLING**

FEAM would like to recall the recommendations made to the European Union (EU) in 2004:

Nutrition has a significant impact on health. 10 to 15% of deaths in the EU are linked to an unbalanced diet and to obesity. A diet, which is too rich in lipids, and in particular saturated fats, constitutes a major risk factor for cardiovascular diseases. Avoiding overweight remains the main preventive factor against breast cancer in post-menopausal women, kidney cancer and endometrial cancer. A diet, which is too rich in rapidly assimilated sugars, favours obesity in children.

Providing calories content in food and sodas is therefore essential for:

- those who wish to control their weight;
- medical practitioners whose advice is often sought and are unable to give it without access to useful information;
- parents who are responsible for choosing their children's food and in need of useful information to select what is best for their health. They may already be misinformed by unscrupulous TV commercials.

Given the impact that lipid-rich food has on health, the total amount of lipids must be indicated. Saturated fatty acids should be distinguished from non-saturated ones since their role and health effects are different. It would therefore be useful to give this information on all types of canned and prepared foods because the same dish may contain different amounts of saturated and unsaturated fatty acids depending on the type of fats used during cooking. Similarly sugar should be distinguished from carbohydrates. The labeling of sodium content is equally indispensable to those who must eat a low-sodium diet.

Nutritional labelling is the responsibility of the EU since the same health information should be given to all consumers throughout the Union. The current situation is unsatisfactory: 1) food labelling is not the same in all the Member states and 2) it does not provide the adequate information in all of them. This nutritional labelling can be implemented in accordance with the European Directive 90/496/CEE and should be systematic and compulsory for all products destined for human consumption, in particular prepared food.

At a time when consumer rights have grown in importance and when attention is often focused on minor or even virtual problems, it would be paradoxical to deprive Europeans of such essential information. Even though not all consumers will take this information into account, it is mandatory to make it available for those who are concerned about their health or who are on special diets.

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