

**WHO Meeting with the Food and Drink Industry on  
A Global Strategy on Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases  
WHO HQ, Geneva, 17 June 2003**

**EVA Comments**

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***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

The EVA bases its view on six key principles:

- > Vending machines can offer a wide range of food and drink, including low-fat, sugar-free, decaffeinated options
- > Vending supplements catering rather than replaces a healthy meal if one is available
- > Eating habits are learned in the very early years of infancy. Reversing obesity rates requires a programme that involves better nutrition education, more physical exercise and appropriate parenting.
- > Vending should not be demonised. Similarly to there being no such thing as a bad or good food, there is no such thing as a good or bad retail channel.
- > Vending machine sales help fund extra-curricular activities, including sports.

The European Vending Association supports a pragmatic approach to healthy eating and drinking in schools and public facilities and suggests that schools, in co-operation with vending machine operators, should agree that the range of food and drink to be sold in vending machines should be as wide as possible and include diet soft drinks, bottled water, juice drinks, milk products, sports drinks, alongside regular soft drinks. Similarly, snack food should include low fat options and/or fruit.

Vending machines should not be demonised. They are just a retail channel and they can sell a wide range of products. Children who can't get the product they want at school may be tempted to leave schools during breaks to get it in kiosks or shops off the school's premises, where they are readily available. This may disrupt school activities.

## ***BACKGROUND***

The European Vending Association represents the manufacturers, ingredient suppliers and operators of the 4.5 million vending machines selling food, drink and refreshment throughout Europe.

The EVA has commented on the draft report on diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases and welcomes the changes made in the Recommendations, which take on board the EVA's views.

Further to the WHO's initiative to organise consultation with the food industry on 17 June 2003 at the Geneva Headquarters, the EVA would like to continue to actively contribute to the process of defining a global strategy to fight non-communicable diseases.

The EVA supports the general position held by the food and drink industry, as expressed by the document drafted by CIAA/GMA.

The detailed views of the vending industry are outlined below.

## ***ABOUT VENDING***

Vending is an alternative distribution channel to classic retail. It has the major advantage of being available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, wherever a vending machine may be of use to consumers. A great number of vending machines can therefore be found in schools, university campuses, sports and leisure clubs, and on many public sector premises.

An additional advantage of vending is that the vending machine sales provide schools with much needed funding for cultural programmes, equipment such as computers, as well as sports and extra-curricular programmes.

A vending machine can sell almost any product, the range on offer being agreed by the school authorities and the operator who provides those products.

Vending generally supplements, rather than replaces, the children/students refreshment service. They don't prevent students eating a proper lunch if one is available.

## ***ABOUT EATING HABITS***

Eating habits are learned in the home in the very early years of infancy. Pupils and students who desire candy snacks or soft drinks will obtain them in a wide range of places: at home, in shops near the home or the school.

Obesity is a complex problem, the sources of which are multiple. Reversing obesity rates in children and adults requires a comprehensive and sustained programme that involves better nutrition education, more physical exercise and appropriate parenting.

Nutrition scientists have stated that there is no such thing as a "non-nutritious" food. All foods contain nutrients. There also is a wide disagreement on what a proper diet should be for each individual.

## ***DEMONISING VENDING MACHINES DOES NOT MAKE SENSE***

Vending is a distribution channel that has the great advantage of offering products where they are needed. Offering a range of products that include low-fat, sugar-free alternatives is a decision that depends upon the school.

Also, a number of EVA members are taking actions to promote better eating habits in co-operation with schools, local authorities, or government agencies. We believe that these are positive steps. It makes no sense to demonise or stigmatise one retail channel against the others.

## ***WHAT THE EVA WILL DO***

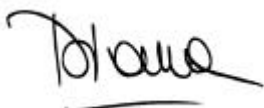
The European Vending Association groups the national associations of vending, as well as companies with a leading role in the industry. The EVA will propose to its members to work on a Code of Practice for vending in school, whereby members can agree to commit themselves to work with schools to identify particular needs and to help ensure that a wide choice of food and beverages is available within the school environment.

## ***MORE INFORMATION***

The EVA's website contains a list of members, outlines the aims and objectives of the association, as well as presents the activities of the association. Please visit [www.eva.be](http://www.eva.be)

More information can also be obtained with the EVA Secretariat in Brussels.

Yours sincerely,



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Director-General

## **Document history**

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