



PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019

## *Euro Coop Raises Awareness of #WorldObesityDay 2019*

### *Consumer Co-operatives Continue Their Commitment to Curb the Epidemic*

Since 2000, the obesity epidemic has continued to spread in almost all European countries. Today with **51.6% of its adult population overweight or obese**, Europe is at great risk of seeing the incidence of non-communicable disease (NCDs) rise sharply in the near future. Obesity is in fact **rivalling smoking** as a leading cause of numerous chronic illnesses, and as such is associated with high healthcare costs, lower employment and loss of work productivity. Children who are overweight or obese are more likely to suffer from poor health and **psychosocial problems** as adolescents and as adults. Moreover, socio-economic status and poor education have a marked influence on obesity rates, therefore raising **inequality** concerns as well. In the majority of the cases, obesity is a **preventable** condition. However,



nowadays consumers are highly influenced by a multitude of factors when it comes to food products and eating habits.

The environment we live in is often conducive to **poor nutrition**; similarly, strategic marketing of unhealthy foods makes it harder for consumers to make healthy choices.

Food retailers have definitely a role to play when it comes to responding to the obesity challenge and, among them, consumer co-operatives are certainly in a **privileged position** because of the special link they nurture with consumer-members and society at large. **Consumer education** and **information** are one of the strongholds of consumer co-operative action and, thus, a key asset when it comes to tackling the phenomenon.

Euro Coop members have indeed proven their commitment in this field with a large variety of actions carried out throughout the years. Good examples include the numerous in-store initiatives and communication campaigns to **incentivize** the consumption of fruits and vegetables, a critical aspect of a healthy lifestyle especially considering that **less than 15%** of European citizens consume at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables per day, as recommended by the WHO. From the Free Fruits for Kids Campaign of The Channel Islands Co-operative Society (UK) to the more recent support of the Co-operative Group (UK) to the national advertising campaign [Veg Power](#) in the UK, consumer co-operatives have committed to increasing awareness and making the **'healthiest choice the easiest choice'**.



Consumer co-operatives have also resorted to **technologies** to enable consumers achieving healthier and more sustainable diets. For example, Eroski proposed to their consumer-members the personalized program [Ekilibria](#), while Coop Sweden, Coop Denmark and the S Group in Finland have invested in the creation of **bespoke websites** designed to help consumers meet their daily dietary needs by proposing healthy recipes and facilitating their online shopping. More recently, Coop Italy teamed up with major food producers to launch the [ViviSmart](#) project which is aimed to promote the benefits of the Mediterranean Diet to families and children.



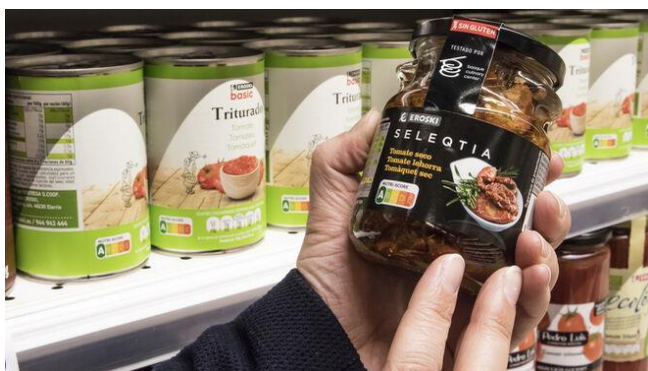
When talking about obesity prevention, the **education of children** to pursue a balanced diet is paramount to tackle the issue. This is the reason why Euro Coop members have invested into **school programmes**, such as [Escuela de Alimentación](#) [School of

Nutrition] and [Sapere Coop](#), which offer schools structured activities and resources to **teach kids** the key principles of **healthy lifestyles, responsible consumption and nutrition**.

Another important aspect in the fight against obesity is how **product information** is displayed and consumers' ability to make informed choices. Recently, **nutrition labeling** has been an increasingly debated topic due to the arising of several proposals for innovative Front-of-Pack labels. In the aim of **transparency**, consumer co-operatives are committed to giving the best and most **comprehensive** information to their consumers, by using logos such as the wholegrain logo, schemes such as the traffic light system or the Nutri-score labels, which following France and Belgium has recently been adopted in Spain and Germany.

Today, talking about obesity means acknowledging that in order to prevent and manage a global epidemic, interventions should be implemented at **every level**, from international co-operation to local actions. While current predictions estimate that by 2030 half of global





population will be obese, with a rate up to **83%** in some countries, citizens' awareness is growing thanks to increasing attention and dialogue on the issue. Consumer co-ops remain **committed** to engage in this dialogue and continue to **contribute** in the fight against obesity by giving maximum priority to the **promotion of healthy** and **high-quality food** products to foster prevention and encourage the consumers' informed choice.

**For more information, please contact:**

**Giulia Tarsitano**  
Food Policy Manager  
[gtarsitano@eurocoop.coop](mailto:gtarsitano@eurocoop.coop)  
tel: + 32 2 285 00 74



**You can consult the Euro Coop Obesity Database [here](#).**