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**EUROPEAN SNACKS ASSOCIATION GATHERS EU OFFICIALS AND INDUSTRY IN BRUSSELS TO DISCUSS GAPS BETWEEN CONSUMERS AND STAKEHOLDERS EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS SAVOURY SNACKS**

**BRUSSELS, 14 OCTOBER 2015:**

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, the European Snacks Association (ESA) organised its 5th Savoury Snacks Summit in Brussels and brought together key players from different fields interested in nutrition and health to engage in a constructive debate and try to address the thought-provoking question “Who is really listening to consumers?”

*“We at ESA are proud to provide such a platform for dialogue on this important issue” said **Mathias Adank, ESA president.** “We all claim to know what the expectations of consumers are, hence creating a multitude of responses that blur efficient policy making. It is therefore necessary to find common grounds of discussion and action” he added.*

In an inspiring key note speech, **Martin Seychell, Deputy Director General for Health at DG SANTE**, recalled that rising obesity levels in Europe are a major public health challenge and called on the sector to maintain its valuable contribution in tackling this issue. Acknowledging the sector’s achievements on product reformulation, he also praised and thanked ESA for its efforts in responsibly advertising to children as the only EU trade association being member of the EU Pledge.

**The first session explored possible ways to reconcile diverging – and sometimes contradictory – expectations from stakeholders about savoury snack products.** While bearing in mind consumers interests, the panellists highlighted the difficulty to elaborate nutrition and health policies which can reconcile public health objectives and economic growth.

**Roula Clerc-Nassar from PepsiCo** highlighted the tremendous efforts made by the industry to adapt to this situation notably through reformulation and product development while constantly being challenged by consumers’ fast evolving preferences and an increasingly demanding regulatory environment. *“We know that for our consumers taste is king. We are constantly looking at finding the sweet spot between health and taste and will continue to do in the future” she said.*

**Philippe Roux, Head of Unit Health Determinants at DG SANTE** added that product reformulation is certainly an important field in which all food manufacturers should further invest while stressing that this should be an *“across the board effort”* to ensure fair competition among manufacturers and meaningful results at the end of the day.

**The second session allowed for the panellists to have a different look at the issue by discussing the potential of behavioural economics to inform nutrition policy making and reconcile gaps between consumer expectations and their behaviour.**

**Eugenia Polizzi from Joint Research Center** elaborated on the European Commission's approach towards this emerging field of science and explained what are the opportunities and limits associated with the concept of "nudging consumers" when it comes to food choices.

**Robert Torck from Lorenz Snack World** insisted on the fact that snacks manufacturers have long since adopted responsible approaches on consumer communication - including nudge interventions such as reducing portion sizes - to help them build healthier and more balanced diets. He called on all involved stakeholders, including the retailers which are essential actors in the chain, to further reflect on the opportunities offered by this relatively novel concept.

**Member of the European Parliament, Virginie Rozière**, recalled that the industry is potentially in best position to develop efficient nudging approaches but also stressed that there should be an incentive for those who are ready to engage in this path. *"The issue of transparency and trust is key"*, she added. *"We should not forget either that nudging is not a substitute to consumer information. The guiding principles of our action should be to put people in the best position to make choices that are good for them"*.

*"We see some potential in soft approaches such as nudging techniques as they have the capacity to influence consumers without infantilizing them and heavily interfering with business, which is often the case with traditional policies. However, it is absolutely crucial to have a better and common understanding of how consumers tick if we want to progressively shift their behaviours in a sustainable manner"* said **Sebastian Emig, Director General of ESA**, when concluding this afternoon of constructive debates.

*"As we have always done, the European Snacks Association will be further promoting dialogue with all interested stakeholders to make sure we are pulling in the same direction for the long-term benefits of our consumers."*

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**Notes for editors**

**About the European Snacks Association**

The European Snacks Association (ESA) is the voice of the European savoury snack and snack nut industry. On behalf of manufacturers, their suppliers as well as national trade organisations, we promote the development and understanding of savoury snack products at European level. The sector offers a wide variety of products including potato crisps, extruded snacks, corn chips / tortillas, baked snacks, crackers, pretzels, savoury biscuits, popcorn, meat snacks, fruit snacks, peanuts and other snack nuts.

The association was founded in 1961 and today covers about 80% of the European market, whose retail value amounted to around €EUR 14 billion in 2014.

For more information on the European Snacks Association, please visit: [www.esasnacks.eu](http://www.esasnacks.eu)