

**OBESITY STRATEGY**  
**Food Marketing Institute**

**Approved by the FMI Board of Directors**  
**January 10, 2004**

On November 18 and 19, 2003, representatives from FMI's Consumer Affairs and Communications Committees met in Washington, DC, to discuss how food retailers and wholesalers can take a leadership role to address the issue of weight management. Obesity is recognized as a major risk factor for heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. Without healthy lifestyles and improved weight management, the current generation of children may be the first in history to experience a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

**Meeting Goals**

The specific objective was to develop and gain consensus for FMI's strategic positioning and messaging regarding weight management. This positioning is intended to serve as a platform for all related marketing and member communications activities. The group stressed that outcomes had to be reasonable and practical.

**Gap Analysis**

The group conducted a gap analysis to assess the variety of messages already in the public domain. A few major items surfaced:

- Organizations do not seem to be addressing the *perceived* higher cost of better-for-you foods.
- Convenience products often address time constraints without addressing health and nutrition challenges.
- Many messages are in the public domain but few are at retail where purchasing decisions are made.
- Retail employees can play a greater role.

**Target Audience**

*The group agreed the fundamental target audience includes primary household shoppers and supermarket associates.*

Primary household shoppers encompass caregivers for multi-aged households who are the gatekeepers and/or decision makers for their families. This audience is most likely to be time-constrained and confused by conflicting health messages, yet receptive to prevention and healthy lifestyle messages when making their food purchasing decisions.

Supermarket associates are food consumers and shoppers also. It is in the industry's best interest to promote initiatives that can positively impact employee health.

**Unique Positioning**

Retailers are ideally positioned to undertake a visible role because they:

- Offer frequent, direct access to the broadest spectrum of consumers.
- Offer a wide variety of choices.
- Provide a credible and trusted link to their communities.

## **Parameters for Success**

For a successful education initiative to be sustained, it must be:

- Supported by top management.
- “Ownable” and adaptable for individual member companies.
- Understandable and usable by all shoppers.
- Cost-effective.
- Sustainable.
- Solution-oriented.
- Credible.
- Undertaken with credible partners
- Inclusive from both a socio-economic and “all foods fit” point of view.
- Educational and informative, not prescriptive.
- Focused on clear, positive messages.
- Innovative but able to leverage the resources of existing, successful programs.
- Measurable.

## **Goals and Objectives**

### *Overarching Goal*

- To build awareness of the supermarket as a community resource for healthy living.

### *Specific Measurable Objectives*

- To help primary household shoppers and associates discover healthy lifestyle information tied to store products. (Measured by changes in purchasing patterns such as in the produce department.)
- To encourage supermarket shoppers and associates to visit supermarkets as their first choice for fast, easy, healthy meal solutions. (Measured by customer counts, basket item counts and frequency measures).
- To increase the confidence of supermarket shoppers and associates in their ability to find and prepare healthy meal solutions. (Measured by consumer feedback).
- To position the supermarket industry as a significant part of the weight management solution. (Measured by media coverage of industry).

## **Potential Key Messages**

### *Must be based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

- Healthy lifestyle is achievable.
- Supermarkets are a consistent and reliable resource for information.
- Supermarkets are a resource for the variety of products you need, whatever your lifestyle.
- You can have confidence in healthy food choices found at your supermarket.

## **Working Strategic Positioning Statement**

As the purchasing agent for the consumer, supermarkets recognize that obesity is a critical public health issue and supermarkets are committed to helping their customers and associates achieve a healthy lifestyle that includes healthy eating and physical activity.