

# Science, health, and wellness



Science, Health, and Wellness: Lisa Katic, the Senior Food & Health Policy Advisor to the Grocery Manufacturers of America represented the association's perspective on the issue of obesity and overweight problems among American citizens. She argues that restrictions, bans, denying access to select food products are not the optimal way of handling the obesity problem. Instead, the GMA argues, educative programs on nutrition awareness and encouraging physical exercise would be better alternatives. To its credit, the GMA has already instituted the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition (ACFN), which oversees various health initiatives across the country.

From the arguments set forth by Lisa Katic, it is evident that the GMA does not claim any responsibility for the prevailing obesity epidemic. To the contrary, she asserts that the GMA is going out of its way to promote healthy lifestyles among its consumers. The GMA believes that restricting access to unhealthy foods not only interferes with consumer's choice but is also difficult to implement. For example, no food item is unhealthy per se; the quantity consumed, the frequency with which it is consumed and the pre-existing health condition of the consumer are all factors that determine if a particular food item is healthy or not. Hence, the GMA believes that blankly labeling foods as unhealthy does not make sense.

A better approach to tackling obesity and overweight, the GMA believes, is through educating the consumer about what comprises a balanced and optimal diet, and letting the consumer make the choice themselves. This way the burden of responsibility will be on the consumer as it rightly should be. After reading through the GMA's argument in its entirety, one can easily see that their actions in terms of manufacture and marketing of food

products are ethically sound. It would be hasty to judge them as responsible for the widespread obesity problem that exists. But to the GMA's credit, and as a mark of their concern for their consumers' health, its allied institution the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition (ACFN) has come up with several innovative programs. These include Vermont Fit and Healthy Kids Initiative, The Carol M. White Physical Education for Progress, The 5-a-Day Better Health Program, Kidnetic. com, America on the Move, etc. When seen in the context of this plethora of initiatives Lisa Katic's testimony to the Vermont House Committee is definitely a step forward in tackling obesity.