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Media release

Snack food debate fuelled by nutrition and obesity

The announcement by Mars Snackfood Australia to reduce the size of their Mars bar as a direct response to Australia's obesity issue, is an example of how spin is being used to camouflage the real issues of nutrition, says the Australian Banana industry.

"Last week we issued a statement advising that bananas are Australia's No. 1 natural snack food, not only in terms of the numbers sold, but also nutritionally," says David Chenu, Marketing Manager for Australian Bananas.

"To hear Mars claim that their bar is the biggest-selling snack in Australia and that it has been reduced in size by 11% in the interests of managing obesity and yet sold at the same price is a joke.

"According to media reports, Peter West from Mars said the company has reduced the size of its bars because they deliver too many calories. It is widely acknowledged that too many calories cause obesity. But they say they have reduced the size of the product in the interests of health, albeit keeping the same price?

"But if the company is serious about obesity why not take a positive stand and alert consumers on the pack that Mars bars can contribute to obesity?

"That way Australians may be encouraged to reduce their consumption of this confectionery in favour of more healthy fresh produce like a banana.

"On the positive side it is pleasing to see the processed food industry try and reduce their calories. Mars has reduced its bar to less than 250 calories per serve.

"In the meantime, Mother Nature has always understood what humans need to manage their bodies. That's why it came up with nature's energy snack - less than 100 calories a medium banana for way less than \$1 per serve, which sure beats \$1.75 for a massive 250 calories in the reduced Mars bar version.

"The banana is the perfect snack. It's not worried about its fat content, because there never was any there. It's simply a wonderfully filling food," Chenu says.

The newly released Inquiry Into Obesity in Australia* report stated that obesity in 2008 cost our economy \$8.2 billion and cites Australia as the fifth fattest country with the percentage of our adult population having a body mass index of over 30 being almost three times that of Switzerland.

So, while the snack food industry does its best to improve, go for the snack that got it right in the first place - the banana.

* www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/haa/obesity/report.htm#top

Enquiries

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