

**FINAL EMEA NEWS RELEASE**

*Stressed workers more likely to make poor nutritional choices, says new research*

[London, 26 June, 2012]

Highly stressed work conditions across Europe's largest economies are creating a labour force of snackers, not slackers, according to new research.

New research by global nutrition company Herbalife, carried out in conjunction with food psychologist Dr. Barbara Stewart-Knox of The Northern Ireland Centre for Food and Health (NICHE), reveals a link between high work-related stress and EU workers' increased likelihood to snack on unhealthy foods high in fat, sugar and salt.

The "Stress and snacking: a study of the European office" research recorded the stress levels and eating habits of 4,980 office workers in UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy. The findings reveal that workers experiencing high levels of stress are significantly more likely to snack outside of their main meals, and when they do so, they are more likely to choose unhealthy snacks.

**Stress linked with unhealthy snacking**

With over two in five European office workers reporting high levels of stress, it is unsurprising that, on average, professionals are eating nearly eight unhealthy snacks each working week. Females and young professionals are most vulnerable; resorting to high sugar and energy snacks such as crisps and chocolate to combat long hours and high stress.

Experts fear that poor diet and nutrition in the workplace, could lead to lower energy and focus potentially costing billions in lower productivity and absenteeism<sup>1</sup>.

"Looking ahead the trend for high stressed workers to snack more often and more unhealthily is a worry as the major economies of Europe continue to experience distress and a prolonged period of challenging economic conditions," said Herbalife's Neil Spiers, Vice President, Northern Europe & Africa.

"If long hours, skipping meals and snacking to boost energy becomes the norm for today's EU workforce, the future generation of senior managers faces potential health risks if their current eating habits follow them as they climb the career ladder."

**Key findings**

The 'Work-Snack Balance' report, published today, reveals:

- Stress Test: 44% report high stress and 1 in 2 EU workers do at least 2 hours over-time a day. French working the highest number of overtime hours, more than twice the average.
- Britons experience the highest levels of work stress, marginally higher than the French, with Italy reporting the lowest average work stress.
- Snacking culture: 44% of people across Europe snacked outside of meal times

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/press-and-media-centre/news/WCMS\\_005175/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/press-and-media-centre/news/WCMS_005175/lang-en/index.htm)

- The UK leads Europe in snacking outside of meal time, followed by Italy
  - UK - 55% of the working population snacks outside of mealtime
  - Italy – 46% of the working population snacks outside of mealtime
  - Germany – 45%
  - Spain – 39%
  - France – 34%
- Workers who report high work stress are more likely to eat unhealthily than those with low or average work stress
- The average EU worker eats 7.5 unhealthy snacks in the working week
- Women report higher levels of work stress and more unhealthy snacking than men
- Young workers, 18-25, are most vulnerable as they consume the highest number of unhealthy snacks, with a mean score of 1.62, and those aged 56-65 consuming the least, with a score of 1.28. They also sleep worse than older workers
- 26-35 year olds experience the highest stress levels, and equally high levels of unhealthy snacking
- High stress workers are twice as likely to each for a soft drinks to boost energy
- Workers in all countries consumed more chocolate and sweets, crisps, soft drinks, cookies and chips at home than at work, examples of ‘reward snacking’ in the evening
- Employees who work longer hours also eat more chocolate – 25.5 percent of workers who did overtime ate chocolate; compared to just 15 percent of those who worked their contracted hours
- Those experiencing high work stress take longer to get to sleep. Poor sleep can lead workers to eat foods rich in sugar and energy to compensate
- Workers who have trouble falling asleep (over 20 mins) consume more crisps, chocolate, chips and soft drinks than those who sleep more easily.

### **Expert Analysis**

Dr. Barbara Stewart-Knox, The School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Ulster said:

“The findings are of relevance not only to occupational and public health officials but to employers and policymakers as well. The results suggest specific groups are at higher risk of work stress which may impact upon their nutritional choices and overall health. Specifically, our findings imply that individuals residing in the UK, especially females and those experiencing stress would derive most benefit from intervention to encourage healthy eating and reduce unhealthy snacking behaviour in the work place.”

Nutrition and stress expert, Miguel Toribio-Mateas, commented:

“From a nutritional point of view, the hormones and chemicals released in the body when we experience high stress levels can induce cravings for both sugary and salty snacks. While some stress is a motivator, this study very clearly shows that unless we work on collectively reducing work-related stress, Europe will have trouble reversing the public health epidemic caused by rising obesity levels.”

Herbalife’s Neil Spiers said:



“Employers will be interested to learn that such a large segment of EU workers endure high stress and are more likely to resort to unhealthy snacks to cope. By bringing attention to this emerging trend we can help educate millions of employees on how to get the right nutrition. It is time for employers across Europe to sit up and take notice of the growing stress snacking office culture.”

### **Recommendations for employers**

The report contains recommendations for EU employers who want to improve the eating habits and health of their workforces:

- 1) Consider providing fresh fruit free of charge or for a very low cost throughout the work day
- 2) Consider bringing in a ban on employees eating meals at their desks
- 3) Ensure adequate facilities are available on site to prepare food
- 4) Allow outside vendors of healthy snacks and foods such as small packets of nuts, olives, wholemeal bread, wholemeal cookies, juices and salads into the workplace
- 5) Consider banning soft drinks machines – the research shows that highly stressed workers are twice as likely to consume soft drinks than low stressed workers
- 6) Encourage workers to “take a break” – go for a walk/ to the gym/for a run – rather than “have a snack”
- 7) Lobby the government for tax relief on healthier eating habits and equipment (for example, mixers and blenders)

**-Ends-**

A copy of the report and a press kit on the results can be down-loaded at [www.stress-snacking.eu](http://www.stress-snacking.eu)

### **For enquiries and expert interview requests, please contact:**

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### **About Herbalife**

Herbalife Ltd. (NYSE:HLF) is a global nutrition company that sells weight-management, nutrition, and personal care products intended to support a healthy lifestyle. Herbalife products are sold in 81 countries through a network of independent distributors. The company supports the Herbalife Family Foundation and its Casa Herbalife program to help bring good nutrition to children. Herbalife's website contains a significant amount of information about Herbalife, including financial and other information for investors at <http://ir.Herbalife.com>. The company encourages investors to visit its website from time to time, as information is updated and new information is posted.

### **About The Northern Ireland Centre for Food & Health (NICHE)**

The Northern Ireland Centre for Food & Health (NICHE), a centre of excellence set up with EU structural funds in 1996 to provide greater understanding of diet-related health issues.



NICHE has 24 academic, 4 technical and 18 research staff, as well as over 20 postgraduate research students.