

# SECTOR EXPERTISE FOOD AND NUTRITION



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## Introduction

# No substitute for experience



Food and nutrition is a fast-changing and developing sector, covered by an equally fluid regulatory framework. Each year the industry feels the commercial impact of new and often complex regulations, mainly developed by EU legislators. In addition, environmental targets and public health issues such as obesity, smoking and alcohol consumption remain priorities for many governments. All of this requires attention and engagement from industry.

Deciding how and when to engage can be difficult: many interest groups including competitors, trade associations or consumer organisations, co-own the debate. As the leading specialist in public affairs and communications for the food and nutrition sector, The Whitehouse Consultancy can help you make your voice heard.

### **Developing links, building influence**

We have a strong track record of developing effective links between our clients, regulators and policy makers in the United Kingdom, European institutions, individual member states and globally. And our detailed knowledge of the regulatory framework and experience in the decision-making and

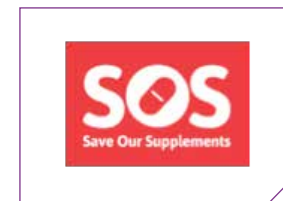
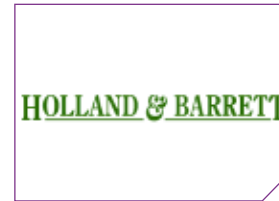
policy-development arena means we are ideally placed to support your organisation through public affairs activity.

Our consultants have a wide range of experience across the sector and provide full public affairs and corporate communications advice across all regulatory, political and media audiences.

## Our clients

# Some of our food and nutrition clients

Our credentials in the sector include successful projects with EU-wide trade associations and consumer organisations, as well as global corporations and small specialist businesses; raising their profile, developing their authority, and building their influence.



## The Whitehouse approach

The regulatory and policy framework for the food and nutrition sector is a complicated area subject to continuous change. Our aims are to ensure you understand how regulations and policies impact upon your organisation, and that you are able to make your voice heard by the right people, at the right time and in the right way.

The past couple of years have certainly not been quiet for the industry. Food businesses have had to continually respond to a spate of new requirements including new rules on nutrition and health claims, new food information and labelling requirements; new legislation covering foods for specific groups; moves to reform novel foods legislation; official controls and organic production; and the establishment of EU-wide lists of additives or flavourings.

Public health policies and environmental and food waste targets have also been under the spotlight. As well as ensuring the safety of food, policy-makers are increasingly concerned with nutrition, quality and sustainable production. This is unlikely to change over the next few years and international developments, such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), are only likely to further complicate matters.



## The Whitehouse approach





## Our services

Our expertise in food and nutrition means we are able to deliver a number of specialist services. These include tailored monitoring services, which ensure that you are up to speed with the developments in the sector; public affairs and lobbying, crucial to make your voice heard by political audiences and regulators; public relations and crisis management, which enable you to manage your profile in the public sphere; market access, helping you to maximise your commercial opportunities; and event management. These services can be part of an integrated campaign or can be delivered on a standalone basis.

- Specialist political and regulatory monitoring
- Public affairs and lobbying
- PR & media relations
- Market access
- Event management
- Alliance building
- Integrated campaigns and communications



## Our services

### SPECIALIST POLITICAL AND REGULATORY MONITORING



Ongoing changes to food legislation have a considerable impact on both consumers and businesses. Being aware of what is going to happen and being able to anticipate and prepare for these changes provides an important advantage over potentially unprepared competitors.

The Whitehouse Consultancy team has been monitoring activity in this sector for many years and is perfectly placed to deliver comprehensive monitoring services tailored to your individual needs. We liaise on a regular basis with regulators and policy-makers, following the political trends and complex decision-making processes both at European and national level.

Most importantly, however, we go beyond simple monitoring services: we analyse and explain to you how the developments could impact on your organisation and what steps to take to mitigate any potential problems.

We monitor a diverse range of sources, ranging from scientific opinions and technical meetings of the European Food Safety Authority; discussions within the European Commission Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCFAH); debates in the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee of the European Parliament; meetings of the Council and developments at national level, including on wider public health issues.

### PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND LOBBYING



Our political and regulatory monitoring is at the foundation of our public affairs work. We use this information to inform our strategies and identify where, when and how our clients can contribute to the policy-making process, identifying any challenges and opportunities that might be encountered along the way.

Key to our work for our clients is determining who can best influence the changes they wish to see and how best to inform their decision making processes. We help hone our clients' messages to ensure they are relevant to each audience they address, providing training if necessary to ensure they perform to the best of their ability in front of a range of audiences and stakeholders.

At all times we ensure our clients are engaged in an open, effective and transparent dialogue with decision makers.

### PR & MEDIA RELATIONS



A presence in the media can be vital in raising awareness of an organisation's position and views, gaining public support, building and promoting a brand or product or mitigating a crisis. The Whitehouse Consultancy knows that, done properly, public relations and media relations are powerful tools that can play a significant part in helping our clients to achieve their objectives.

We believe our clients should make news rather than just respond to it. This is the foundation of all our public relations strategies. We work with our clients to communicate their news and opinions in a way that will capture the attention of their audience.



## Our services

### MARKET ACCESS



The food and nutrition sector is extensively affected by the political environment and changes in policy and regulation, which can present both opportunities and threats. Many organisations also look to offer their services to public sector bodies. Identifying relevant policy changes and procurement opportunities can be critical to an organisation's development. This is an important part of the service that we provide.

### EVENT MANAGEMENT



The Whitehouse Consultancy works with clients to deliver events and events programmes which bring together key stakeholders, encourage and inform debate and raise awareness of important issues.

The events we organise range in size and type from small round table discussions and dinners to large scale receptions, conferences and ceremonies. This involves working closely with our clients to manage budgets and suppliers, identify key stakeholders and speakers, distribute invitations and collate RSVPs and manage the event on-site.

A core principle of our approach is that an event should not just be something that is over in a day; we make sure that events result in follow-up activities that help our clients achieve their long-term objectives and contribute to their stakeholder engagement.

### ALLIANCE BUILDING



Certain goals – notably in the food and nutrition sector – can only be achieved by a number of organisations working together and acting in concert. The Whitehouse Consultancy has helped set up and provides secretariat services to the European Specialist Sports Nutrition Alliance (ESSNA) and the European VLCD Industry Group.

Following the formation of these alliances, we then undertake all administrative work, including expanding membership, and provide strategic political advice.

### INTEGRATED CAMPAIGNS & COMMUNICATIONS



Campaigns work best when their various threads – political lobbying, media engagement, effective public relations and event management – all work in harmony. At The Whitehouse Consultancy, we pride ourselves on developing and implementing strategies for our clients in which services are delivered as part of an integrated approach that has the client's goals at its heart.

Our work is outcomes-driven, meaning that everything we do is considered and every strategy we write has clearly defined objectives so that our clients know what success will look like and so that progress towards achieving goals can be regularly assessed.



# Health foods and supplements

Businesses operating in the vitamins, minerals and nutritional and health foods industry continue to face significant regulatory and policy threats that could seriously impede growth and damage future prospects. This is not solely the result of new legislation, such as the Food Supplements Directive and Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation, but also as a result of policy makers' perceptions of such products.



The Whitehouse Consultancy has supported many businesses specialising in this sector, including Holland & Barrett and Vitabiotics, as well as trade bodies such as the Health Food Manufacturers Association and consumers organisations such as Consumers for Health Choice. Our successes for clients in this sector include:

#### Maximum permitted levels

We have supported efforts to avoid the setting of overly restrictive maximum permitted levels for vitamins and minerals in food supplements, successfully ensuring that such levels have still not been set, more than a decade after the relevant legislation was passed.

#### Nutrition and health claims

On nutrition and health claims, we have vigorously represented our clients' views at numerous meetings and other events regarding the adoption of the Community list of permitted health claims, and continuously engage with a number of claims relevant for the sector.

#### EFSA fees

We helped block proposals for the widespread introduction of charges for the processing of dossiers by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

#### Tax loopholes

We have worked to close tax loopholes for Channel Islands based companies who were refusing to implement relevant EU legislation and damaging compliant UK businesses.

#### Engagement with regulatory bodies

We have built strong relationships with key regulatory bodies in the UK, including government departments, non-departmental public bodies and civil servants.

#### Europe

Similarly, we have developed strong relationships with relevant political audiences in Europe, including key Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), officials within the European Commission, policy experts in regulatory agencies in different European countries, Permanent Representations and important figures within EFSA.



## Dietetic foods

The Whitehouse Consultancy has a great deal of experience working with organisations in the dietetic food sector - in particular sports nutrition and slimming foods - helping them to influence policy, engage with key stakeholders, create political support and raise awareness of issues.

The Whitehouse Consultancy helped set up and, for the past eleven years, has provided secretariat support, public relations and public affairs advice to the European Specialist Sports Nutrition Alliance (ESSNA) and the European Very Low Calorie Diet (VLCD) Industry Group. We have also provided public affairs support to a number of individual businesses in this sector - including Maxinutrition, CLF Distribution Ltd, LighterLife and the Cambridge Weight Plan.

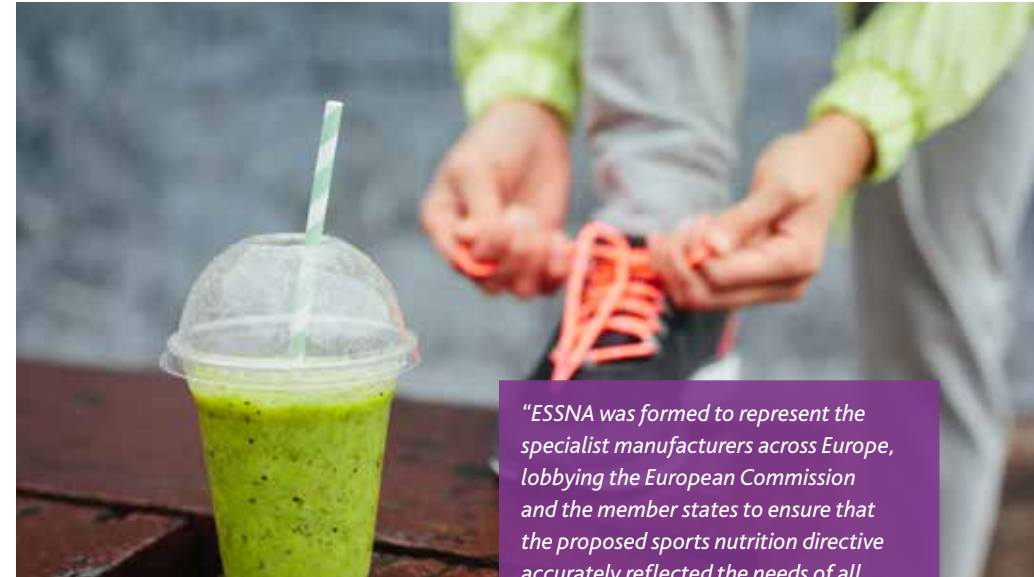
This sector has been particularly affected by the revision of the EU legislation on dietetic foods, Directive 2009/39/EC on foodstuffs intended for particular nutritional uses. ESSNA and VLCD have become authoritative voices for the industry in dialogue, and are regularly consulted by the European Commission's officials, national experts, parliamentarians and journalists.

We have delivered specific and concrete results for their members:

### Sports nutrition

We successfully worked with our clients to block the introduction of a flawed draft directive on sports nutrition products in 2003/2004.

More recently, we blocked inclusion of sports nutrition in the scope of the new Regulation on Foods for Specific Groups replacing the PARNUTS Framework Directive. We are currently engaging with the authorities on implementation for this Regulation to ensure an appropriate final outcome for the subsequent report on sports nutrition regulation to be prepared by the Commission.



*"ESSNA was formed to represent the specialist manufacturers across Europe, lobbying the European Commission and the member states to ensure that the proposed sports nutrition directive accurately reflected the needs of all the athletes that currently use these products. This was seen as a mammoth task and we would not have got off the ground without Chris Whitehouse and his team's expert advice, direction and support. With their assistance we are now making progress that at the outset of this work seemed almost unattainable. On behalf of all the companies that ESSNA represents I would like to extend our thanks."*

*Dr Adam Carey  
Chairman, European Specialist Sports Nutrition Alliance*

### Slimming foods

For slimming foods, we worked with our clients to block the classification of such products as foods for special medical purposes, an outcome which would have seriously damaged businesses, and their customers, in this sector.

### Engagement with EU Commission

The Whitehouse Consultancy has also managed to get clients seats at the Commission's table to participate in discussions and influence proposals before they have even been drafted.

### Non-compliance campaign

We have also taken forward a very successful campaign against companies selling uncompliant and often dangerous products which were tarnishing the reputation of the sector.





## Ingredients, additives and flavourings

Beyond specialist foods or supplements, The Whitehouse Consultancy also works with the industry to ensure a favourable regulatory climate for key ingredients, additives or flavourings. We monitor activity in this sector, both the work of food safety agencies and the responses of policy makers. Our work with Ajinomoto has, for example, helped to ensure a positive policy and regulatory outcome for popular sweetener aspartame.

Legislation in this area is constantly evolving, with the establishment and update of European Union lists of authorised additives, flavourings or enzymes and continuous scientific assessment. A number of issues are still dealt with at national level and the shape of future regulation remains obscure, in particular for botanical substances and their associated health claims and for substances other than vitamins and minerals.

Meanwhile, how novel ingredients are regulated within the EU is currently the subject of fierce debate. We support our clients in ensuring the best possible outcome for their products and that their views are duly taken into account.

### Food safety

Working with Ajinomoto, manufacturer of the sweetener Aspartame, we have notably helped to ensure that the safety of this ingredient is, once and for all, confirmed through extensive studies by the European Food Safety Authority and the UK Food Standards Agency.

### Evidence based

The unjustified and unscientific media-driven controversy and associated parliamentary debates are appropriately monitored and responded to where a positive difference can be made. Aspartame is properly positioned and evidence and information provided so that policy makers can make informed policy decisions, rather than making decisions based only on media hyperbole and uninformed opinion.

### Emerging opportunities

We are taking advantage of emerging opportunities, an example of this is close monitoring of a campaign recently launched by Public Health England in the framework of their Change4Life scheme, which focusses on encouraging people to make "healthy swaps" in their diets. The Smart Swaps campaign is urging families to make simple food swaps such as switching from sugary drinks to sugar-free or diet drinks that contain sweeteners such as aspartame.





## International trade and customs issues

The Whitehouse Consultancy also works on complex international trade and customs issues, engaging not only with authorities in the EU, but also with the relevant authorities of other countries worldwide. Working with a US manufacturer of whey protein products, Dymatize; its European importer; the US Department of Commerce and the European Commission, we have successfully pressed for solutions to a problematic regulation that directly resulted in higher import duties.

Trade and customs issues are now more than ever a part of the debate, in particular in light of the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). It is important to follow these debates with great attention, as these will have a direct impact on consumers and businesses alike.

More generally, trade and customs issues can have an important impact on the profitability of a number of commercial transactions, and we support our clients in ensuring any issues that arise are addressed in an efficient manner.

We are currently working on behalf of a US company on an issue involving an EU Regulation which contains a flawed test for milk fat that calculates import duties on certain whey protein products. Due to this flaw, the test results in a considerably higher import duty being levied on the products.

As a result of our work:

- The European Commission experienced considerable political pressure from a number of different sources to revise its legislation.
- Draft legislation to remedy the situation is now on the table. This will cut our client's duty bills, resulting in huge savings.
- The Whitehouse Consultancy has established regular contact with US authorities, including the US Department of Commerce, the US Food and Drug Administration and the US Mission to Brussels.
- We have also secured the support of a number of European parliamentarians, relevant UK parliamentarians, the relevant UK Minister and Special Advisor and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.





# Obesity management

The Whitehouse Consultancy helped two prominent weight-management companies, Cambridge Weight Plan and Lighterlife, position themselves as key players in the fight against obesity, one of the most pressing public health problems facing the country. We also organised and ran the first National Obesity Awareness Week, on behalf of the National Obesity Forum.

## NHS changes

With dramatic changes to the NHS in England having taken place since the election of the Coalition Government in May 2010, The Whitehouse Consultancy has provided expert advice in helping these companies navigate their way through a complicated system.

## Engagement with government bodies

This has involved building contacts with the new bodies involved in tackling obesity, from the smallest local level to the most senior civil servants based in Whitehall, to the extent that Cambridge Weight Plan and LighterLife are now regularly invited to informal round-table meetings with key government advisors to discuss obesity issues.

## Parliamentary influence

We have also sought to build support for private providers of weight-management programmes amongst senior parliamentarians with an interest in this issue, including establishing contact with the Minister and the Shadow Minister and briefing members of the powerful and respected Health Select Committee.

## Promoting expertise

This has resulted in a considerable increase in interest in the work of the providers, from local authorities keen to work with providers to pilot their own individual approach to combating obesity, through to national agencies drawing on the expertise of the providers involved when considering how to help people lose weight and live healthier lives.

## Public awareness and action

The Whitehouse Consultancy also organised and ran the first National Obesity Awareness Week for the National Obesity Forum – inspiring a national debate on obesity as a public health issue through an extensive programme of events, supporter engagement, Parliamentary activity and more than 200 pieces of coverage in the national, local, regional and specialist media. The week itself saw a number of events taking place throughout the country at a local and national level, including a reception at Number Ten Downing Street. Preparations are now already underway for National Obesity Awareness Week 2015.



*"National Obesity Awareness Week has been the biggest success in the history of the National Obesity Forum. We have been astounded at the level of attention it has gathered, and are enormously grateful for The Whitehouse Consultancy's commitment, creativity and skill in making it possible."*

**Professor David Haslam,**  
Chair, National Obesity Forum



# Get in touch

If you would like to discuss how we can help with your policy engagement in the food and nutrition sector, please contact:

KATARZYNA WILK  
Senior Consultant

T: 020 7138 3201

E: [katarzyna.wilk@whitehouseconsulting.co.uk](mailto:katarzyna.wilk@whitehouseconsulting.co.uk)



THE WHITEHOUSE CONSULTANCY  
222 Southbank House, Black Prince Road, London SE1 7SJ  
T: +44 (0)20 7463 0690  
[www.whitehouseconsulting.co.uk](http://www.whitehouseconsulting.co.uk)

