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Obesity Crisis Demands Fast Food Innovation

Los Angeles, Calif. – The fat content in your favorite double-stuff cookie will become more transparent when the Food & Drug Administration starts requiring disclosure of trans fats on food labels beginning January 1, 2006.

That leaves major food companies like McDonalds, Kraft, PepsiCo and Nestle just a few years to develop food and beverage products that are healthier but still convenient, tasty and profitable, a task that may not be as easy as it seems.

“Mixing dietitians and food executives will just create more frustration,” says Anthony Zolezzi, a health-food product developer who is credited with innovations such as tuna out-of-the-can for Bumble Bee Seafood and whole grain Mexican food, sold in Trader Joe’s. “Dietitians specialize in nutrition but have no practical knowledge on how food is mass produced and food executives typically don’t have time for creative innovation because they are too caught up with day-to-day business issues and are judged on quarterly earnings.”

But, the demand for healthier foods has kept Zolezzi, who has over 25 years experience in food marketing, manufacturing and distribution, very busy; traveling from coast to coast consulting with companies to develop innovative health food products that can be mass produced but still maintain profits.

He just finished developing a new protein product called Breakfast Jerky, a healthy alternative to the current sugar and carbohydrate laden breakfast options, and is responsible for the first and only USDA certified organic infant formula for Horizon Organic Dairy, going to market this fall.

Zolezzi says the biggest pressure on the food industry right now is developing healthier food products for adolescents. According to the latest report from the National Institutes of Health, there is an estimated 9 million overweight children in America. In Zolezzi’s newly released book, *Chemical-Free Kids* (Kensington Publishing, 2003), he advises parents on how to make better food choices for their children.

“We are looking at two generations that have grown-up on Happy Meals and Mountain Dew,” says Zolezzi. “The challenge for food companies in the next few years will be to develop products that appeal to the fast-food generation but support and maintain a much healthier lifestyle.”