Project LEAN—Lessons Learned from a National Social Marketing Campaign

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Synopsis

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation initiated a social marketing campaign in 1987 to reduce the nation's risk for heart disease and some cancers. Consensus on recommendations for dietary change have stimulated the development of a variety of social marketing campaigns to promote behavior change. Project LEAN (Low-Fat Eating for Amer-

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HE 1991 INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE'S REPORT, "Improving America's Diet and Health: From Recommendation to Action," calls for more social marketing campaigns to improve the nutrition knowledge of the public (1). Project LEAN is a social marketing campaign that has taken the single most important dietary recommendation, dietary fat reduction, and implemented a comprehensive program designed to bring about a major change in the nation's food supply, food marketing, and consumer practices.

The experience gained from other social marketing initiatives on the State or community level provided important guidance for the development of a national program (2,3). These programs followed a comprehensive and integrated approach that achieved changes in health behaviors by using complementary intervention strategies and multiple communications channels and by targeting a range of audiences. Building on these experiences, Project LEAN was designed to promote dietary change among persons, reinforce the change through organizations, and facilitate the change in settings where people are making food choices.

The lessons learned from Project LEAN are important as others begin to plan local or national efforts to sustain dietary change. This article deica Now) is a national campaign whose goal is to reduce dietary fat consumption to 30 percent of total calories through public service advertising, publicity, and point-of-purchase programs in restaurants, supermarkets, and school and worksite cafeterias.

The public service advertising reached 50 percent of the television viewing audience and the print publicity, more than 35 million readers. The toll-free hotline received more than 300,000 calls. Thirty-four organizations joined the foundation in partnership and raised \$350,000 for collaborative activities. Thirteen States implemented local campaigns. Lessons have been learned about the use of the media, market segmentation, effective spokespersons, and successful partnerships. These lessons will be valuable to others planning social marketing campaigns on nutrition and other preventive behaviors.

scribes some accomplishments and lessons learned from the first 3 years of the campaign for the benefit of other social marketing campaigns of this scope and magnitude.

Background

Project LEAN (Low-Fat Eating for America Now) is a national nutrition campaign whose aim is to reduce dietary fat consumption. In 1987, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation's Board of Trustees approved this new initiative—the first national social marketing campaign developed and funded by a private foundation.

The foundation allocated \$3.5 million for the development and implementation of the initiative. The 3-year appropriation supported an initial 18month period for planning, developing, and organizing public service advertising, publicity, community campaigns, and industry collaborations for the national campaign which became fully operational in the fall of 1989. All campaign activities were carried out with the support of a national coalition of participating organizations, called the Partners for Better Health. In 1991, the foundation awarded a grant to the National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics, the public education initiative of the 'The Food Marketing Institute (FMI) survey of household food shoppers found that dietary fat is a major nutritional concern. . . . the biggest jump occurred during the life of this campaign; in 1990 and 1991, concern for fat rose to 42 percent among respondents to the FMI surveys,'

American Dietetic Association, to continue to operate Project LEAN. The campaign will continue as designed to heighten the nation's concern and awareness of the importance of reducing dietary fat and to accelerate the trend towards greater fat reduction (4).

The scientific consensus achieved over the past decade on the strength of the relationship between diet and the major chronic diseases has been significant (5-7). But implementation strategies for stimulating and sustaining the necessary dietary changes required to reduce the risk for these diseases has been slow to take hold (8). Complex public health issues, such as dietary change, require comprehensive programs that create both greater public awareness of the issue and reduce barriers to behavior change in the surrounding environment (9). Because nutrition is uniquely positioned between the commercial marketplace and the public health sector, this type of effort requires a coordinated approach among government, industry, and voluntary sectors. A clear and consistent public health message needs to be conveyed and reinforced throughout the commercial marketplace.

Campaign Goals

Three goals provide the framework for the campaign strategies:

• to accelerate the trend to reduce dietary fat consumption from current levels, 37 percent of calories from fat, to less than 30 percent;

• to increase availability and accessibility of lowfat foods in supermarkets, restaurants, school and worksite cafeterias, and vending machines;

• to promote collaboration between national organizations, including partners and community organizations, around low-fat messages and program strategies.

The strategies are designed to stimulate consumer demand for and increase the availability of low-fat

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foods in the marketplace. The foundation's longterm objective in supporting this effort was to foster greater collaboration among the sectors that influence consumer and marketplace behavior and ultimately institutionalize nutrition education in these settings. Progress on the first goal is being monitored by several federally sponsored surveys, while measurements of goals two and three have been incorporated into a case study analysis of the Project LEAN community campaigns.

Formative Research

Consumer research guided the development of the messages and strategies for the campaign. The foundation commissioned qualitative research to determine the most effective strategies for reaching consumers (10). A series of 10 indepth focus group interviews, conducted in May 1988, with a cross section of the American public, suggested that motivation is the key to reducing the amount of fat in the diet of these respondents. Knowledge of sources of fat was high. However, convenience, lifelong habits, and taste were the major obstacles to sustained dietary change.

Many of the focus group participants cautioned that they are wary of new public warnings about food, and many have reached their limit on the changes they are willing to make. For the purposes of message development, the audience participating in the focus groups seemed most likely to be motivated by factual information regarding dietary fat, particularly information that has immediacy, is personally relevant, and gives them guidelines for action. Other consumer surveys conducted during the same period have found that consumers are increasingly aware of the link between dietary fat and chronic disease, but that changes in dietary practices have lagged behind awareness and concern (11-13).

The Food Marketing Institute's (FMI's) survey of household food shoppers found that dietary fat is a major nutritional concern. This concern about fat in the diet has risen considerably, from 9 percent in 1983 to 27 percent in 1988 in a random sample of supermarket shoppers (14-16). However, the biggest jump occurred during the life of this campaign; in 1990 and 1991, concern about fat rose to 42 percent among respondents to the FMI's surveys (17, 18). Based on these trends and the findings from the focus groups, the Project LEAN messages were developed to be both motivational and informational, to heighten public awareness, and to provide specific guidance for dietary change.

Campaign Design

The strategies designed to accomplish the campaign goals fall into four interrelated program components that characterize the campaign.

1. Media strategies are used to heighten public awareness about dietary fat.

2. Chefs and food journalists demonstrate how to influence behaviors and popular tastes.

3. Partnerships with government agencies, voluntary organizations, and industry associations strengthen and reinforce the message.

4. Community programs create and institutionalize change in the marketplace.

Simultaneous activities occurring in each of these components gave Project LEAN a forceful presence in the marketplace and a unique position among public health campaigns. Balancing consumer education through media and community programs with private sector initiatives through food companies, associations, and professionals gave the project strength in each domain.

Accomplishments

Partners and corporate sponsors. Government agencies, food corporations, and food associations have all contributed to Project LEAN and worked as enthusiastic collaborators. The foundation formed in 1988 a national coalition called the Partners for Better Health to serve Project LEAN in an advisory capacity and to act as national catalysts for action. The coalition includes 34 organizations and agencies representing professionals, voluntary associations, government agencies, and food associations (see box).

During the first 3 years, eight Partners sponsored collaborative events, making a significant financial contribution to promoting the campaign message. The campaign raised a total of \$354,500 from collaborating organizations (table 1). Corporate sponsors supported a Project LEAN luncheon and reception for 1,500 participants held at the Year 2000 Conference hosted by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; a low-fat luncheon and demonstration for members of the National Restaurant Association sponsored by the Sugar Association; and a Project LEAN promotion on grocery bags and in-store magazines throughout the national chain of Safeway stores.

Many organizations joined forces with Project LEAN because their organization alone was unable

Partners for Better Health Member Organizations

American Academy of Family Physicians American Academy of Pediatrics American Association of Retired Persons American Cancer Society American College of Physicians American College of Preventive Medicine American Diabetes Association American Dietetic Association American Federation of Teachers American Home Economics Association American Medical Association American Medical Student Association Foundation American Public Health Association American School Food Service Association Association of American Medical Colleges Association of State and Territorial Health Officials Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine **Congress of National Black Churches** Food Marketing Institute Health Insurance Association of America National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Organizations (COSSMHO) National Fisheries Institute, Inc. National Food Processors Association National Medical Association National Turkey Federation **Produce Marketing Association** United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association U.S. Department of Agriculture Wellness Councils of America U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Administration on Aging Centers for Disease Control National Cancer Institute, Office of Cancer Communications Office of Minority Health

to operate such a campaign either for political reasons, government restrictions, or competition with other members of the partnership. The foundation was uniquely situated as an outsider, able to support the core operation of the program and not in direct competition with any of these cooperating



SOURCE: Levine Huntley Schmidt and Beaver for the Advertising Council, 261 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016-2303.

organizations. The foundation was able to act quickly, make decisions without much bureaucratic red tape, and adapt the program to the changing climate. The Partners added political cachet and were able to extend the program to much larger populations through their own constituents and existing programs. These partnerships often required working individually with each organization to insure that their interests were being met in order to develop collaborative programs.

Guidelines for corporate collaboration were developed to insure that the Project LEAN message would not be compromised and that the campaign would not endorse or promote any specific commercial product. The successful collaborations that developed were very creative and provided a visible forum for the sponsor to be aligned with the effort.

Media—public service advertising. The national public service advertising campaign, sponsored by the Advertising Council in support of Project LEAN, produced two television ads, two radio ads, and three print ads which appeared in newspapers, magazines, and as transit ads (see figure). The ads developed by a volunteer ad agency—Levine Huntley Schmidt and Beaver—were distributed to media outlets nationwide by the Advertising Council. The ads received the ADDY and Clio advertising awards for creative excellence.

The advertising concepts that were approved by the Advertising Council and the three major television networks were not wholeheartedly endorsed by the participating health and nutrition professional associations, government agencies, and food associations. The difficulty in achieving consensus on the advertising concepts was based on inherent differences between communications experts and health professionals. The advertising agency interpreted the research findings to mean that lack of motivation was the major obstacle to dietary change, while the health professionals interpreted the public's need to be one of more specific information. A motivational message can be communicated in a 15- or 30-second television or radio spot, but an informational message is not possible in that timeframe. The advertisers were unable to accommodate the requests of the professional community. Ultimately the foundation approved the spots with some modifications and without the endorsement of the Partners for Better Health.

The Advertising Council compiled the data on media usage of the PSAs (public service announcements), including the Broadcast Advertiser Reports (BAR) which monitors both commercial and public service advertising on television and radio. Accord-

Sponsor	Activity	Contributions
Corporate		
Procter and Gamble	Press briefing	\$ 12,000
Meredith Publishing	Food professionals meeting	10,000
Marshall Fields and Company	American Institute of Wine and Food Luncheon	7,000
Iorningstar Farms	Food media luncheon	7,000
afeway stores	In-store promotion	50,000
raft General Foods	Chef's curriculum Centers for Disease Control reception; idea kit dis-	6,000
ampbell Soup Company		2,750
Total		\$ 9 4,750
Government		
enters for Disease Control	Training workshop	\$120,000
.S. Public Health Service	Booklet reprints	10,000
ational Cancer Institute	"Down Home Healthy" recipe booklet	20,000
.S. Public Health Service	Year 2000; luncheon; reception; exhibit	85,000
	National Medical Association; demonstration; work-	
bod and Drug Administration	shop	1,500
Total		\$236,500
Associations-professional societies		
nternational Apple Institute	Public Voice Food Policy luncheon	\$ 6,000
roduce Market Association	ers luncheon.	2,500
ugar Association	National Restaurant Association luncheon	5,000
merican College of Physicians	Luncheon at national convention	5,750
merican Federation of Teachers	Luncheon at national convention	4,000
Total		\$ 23,250
Grand total		¹ \$354,500

¹Does not include community campaigns.

ing to BAR, Project LEAN PSAs appeared in more than 50 percent of the television viewing households during the first year of the campaign. The television spots were aired primarily during daytime viewing hours. Cable usage was highest, ranking fourth among all Advertising Council campaigns. The appearance of the print ads in newspapers across the country accounted for a total circulation of more than 16.5 million readers. More than 2,800 radio stations played the radio spots.

Project LEAN advertising usage ranked 15th among the 40 Advertising Council campaigns underway during the same period. The total estimated dollar value for Project LEAN's public service advertising for 1990 was more than \$36 million, exceeding the average Advertising Council campaign which generates \$20 million in media time (table 2). The foundation expended \$700,000 for the production of the public service advertising, ranking 10th among the 40 campaigns. The public service ads were terminated at the end of 1 year because of the expense of reissuing the ads and the expense of meeting the demand generated through the free consumer hotline listed in each ad. The heavy response generated increased costs beyond what was affordable within the campaign budget.

Media—publicity. Consumer research and the Project LEAN focus groups indicated that, without detailed knowledge, consumers are unable to modify their diets (10, 19, 20). The public wants practical information about how to select and prepare low-fat alternatives within a balanced diet. A Gallup survey commissioned by the American Dietetic Association and the International Food Information Council found that the public is very knowledgeable about nutrition but translating facts into food choices was difficult (13).

Although media can be an effective tool in heightening public awareness, the amount of consumer information that can be given in a public service ad is severely limited by the air time or print space. Generating publicity is another media strategy which can yield more detailed media coverage of the message. Publicity can also be more easily tailored to the particular information needs of the target audience. Project LEAN, through the public relations firm Porter Novelli, invested in the development of publicity opportunities by providing a steady stream of news and information on the campaign to newspapers, national magazines, television and radio news, talk, and entertainment media. Porter Novelli monitored all the Project LEAN publicity placements throughout the campaign.

An analysis of Project LEAN print publicity during the period October 1989 to June 1990 tabulated 291 articles referring to the campaign, accounting for a total circulation of more than 35 million readers. A majority of these articles appeared in daily newspapers, primarily as news. Publicity appearances on television and radio reached more than 27 million viewers and listeners during that period.

A high degree of visibility was achieved through these media strategies. Media interest in food and nutrition news increased the use of the PSAs and the news coverage of the campaign. Most of the news coverage appeared in the Food and Lifestyle sections of newspapers and in national lifestyle and consumer magazines, while the ads appeared primarily in local newspapers, on local radio stations, on cable television stations, and in a few national magazines.

Media—PSAs versus publicity strategies. Despite their attractiveness and wide usage, the public service ads, overall, did not greatly enhance the impact of this campaign message on the target audience. Their reach was more extensive than the publicity, but the message was very limited. For several reasons, the campaign achieved more from well-placed publicity than from unpaid public service advertising.

1. PSA placement was unpredictable.

2. Delays in the release and use of the ads made it difficult to coordinate them with ongoing campaign activities.

3. Limited messages required information-seeking steps that involved calling a hotline and ordering a brochure.

4. The publicity efforts provided immediately usable information and created the image of an action oriented campaign.

5. The publicity was tailored to the needs of the specific target audience and altered as the campaign evolved.

6. The press releases and publicity events could be easily adapted by the local campaigns at no cost, while the local adaptation of the PSAs was cumbersome and expensive to accomplish. Placing local contacts in the ads, distributing them so they are well-timed to give visibility to the local project, and making sure that the message is meaningful to the local target population is very difficult and expensive to coordinate on a national level.

7. The public service ads were time limited, and the cost of reissuing or producing new ads was prohibitive.

Hotline

The campaign sponsored and promoted through the public service ads and the publicity a consumer hotline, 1-800-EAT-LEAN. A consumer brochure, "LEAN Toward Health," providing practical information on choosing and preparing low-fat foods was offered to consumers who called the hotline (21). As a result of the combination of ads and the campaign publicity, the hotline received nearly 300,000 consumer calls, peaking at 25,000 to 28,000 calls a month during the first 12 months of the campaign.

According to the Advertising Council, this response far exceeded responses to any of their other campaigns. During March 1990, alone, a sharp rise in campaign publicity generated from an appearance on ABC's "Good Morning America" resulted in a flood of calls to the hotline. As publicity efforts subsided, the calls to the hotline declined. The hotline was terminated at the end of 18 months because of its expense. It was costing the campaign more than \$300,000 per year to answer the calls and fulfill the requests. Its termination was a loss to the community projects; they relied heavily on the promotion of the brochure by advertising it on the hotline.

Food Professionals and Food Industry

The need for practical information about applying the principles of good nutrition to food choices and food preparation is essential for stimulating behavior change. Both the food industry and food professionals play an influential role in determining the tastes and habits of the consumer. Project LEAN formed a working group of 35 prominent chefs and food journalists to develop and disseminate low-fat recipes and cooking techniques. They have worked together to create new concepts in low-fat cuisine; all have given generously of their time to bring these concepts to the public.

This group has met annually, and each meeting provided a forum for learning and sharing ideas and food preparation techniques. Their recipes and techniques first captured national attention with the publication of the March 1989 feature article in Better Homes and Gardens magazine, with more than 8 million readers (22).

The chefs have been invited as spokespersons for Project LEAN to design recipes, menus, and make presentations at more than a dozen nationally sponsored events. They made press tours and numerous media appearances, serving as visible spokespersons generating tremendous publicity for the campaign. The chefs have been an important vehicle for building collaborative partnerships for the campaign. Many of their activities have been supported by corporate sponsors or members of the Partners for Better Health. For example, the chefs developed an African American recipe booklet. called Down Home Healthy—a joint effort with the National Cancer Institute and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. It will be released in 1993.

The chefs also developed a handbook to teach other cooks and chefs how to adapt and prepare low-fat recipes. It was partially funded by Kraft General Foods and will be ready for distribution in late 1993. The chefs have made the program unique, attracting the attention of the media, health and nutrition professionals, and the public.

Community Campaigns

The foundation awarded, in 1990, ten 2-year grants to State and local health departments to conduct Project LEAN campaigns.

Maricopa County (AZ) Health Department—supermarket tours Bay Area Cancer Coalition, CA—supermarket chain City of Baltimore Health Department—black churches, media Nebraska Department of Health—worksites, schools Cooperative Extension, University of Nevada—restaurants, casinos New York City Department of Health—neighborhood markets Rhode Island Department of Health—supermarket chain

Utah Department of Health—schools, supermarkets Virginia Department of Health—worksites, supermarkets West Virginia Department of Health—independent grocers

At least three other States (Kansas, Hawaii, Maine) developed Project LEAN campaigns with local funding. Each project's staff has worked within their own community with the media to extend the reach of the campaign message and with food outlets to create change in the food environment. Project LEAN programs have been launched in major supermarket chains, neighborhood grocery stores, restaurants, and churches.

Media activities multiplied the local program effect. Appearances on local television, radio, and

Table 2. Summary of the dollar value of the media's use of Project LEAN's public service announcements and print ads

Media	Estimated dollar value, 1990 ¹
Television (networks and spot)	\$ 5,119,611
Television (cable)	7,050,000
Radio	22,800,000
Newspaper	552,117
Consumer magazine	216,080
Business press	11,910
Transit	425,000
Total	\$36,165,118

¹ The monetary value of the donated time and space is calculated based on a national average for the value of the equivalent in paid advertising.

in the newspaper generated visibility for local Project LEAN sites. Under a foundation grant, the Health Promotion Resource Center at Stanford University provided technical assistance to the projects on program planning and implementation. With the assistance of the resource center, many of the strategies tested by the local campaigns are being expanded to other communities and regions of the country.

Each site individually evaluated the impact of their point-of-purchase program on consumer behavior, while the foundation supported a comprehensive evaluation of all 10 sites. This national evaluation is being conducted by the Department of Health Education of the Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island and will be completed in 1993. The evaluation has two components: (a) a case study analysis of program operations and interventions in supermarkets, restaurants, schools, and worksites in each project site and (b) a post-grant measurement of program institutionalization in health departments and commercial food outlets.

Campaign Institutionalization

The foundation has selected the National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics, the public education initiative of the American Dietetic Association, to continue Project LEAN. The foundation awarded a grant to the center to provide core funding for the program for 1 year (1991–92). The center will raise the additional funds needed to continue to operate and extend Project LEAN. The national center was selected because of its commitment to public education and leadership in nutrition.

Lessons Learned from Project LEAN

National social marketing campaigns are expensive and cumbersome. Historically they have been

funded and operated primarily by large government agencies (23,24). Government agencies, however, often have great difficulty in being flexible, acting quickly, and working closely with the independent and private sectors. Project LEAN represents the first effort to sustain a national nutrition social marketing campaign by an organization external to government, with the support and assistance of a broad coalition of organizations and agencies. Important lessons have been learned from this experience.

1. Advertising and public health professionals must be more aware of their differing approaches to the development of messages. Successful advertising most often is simple, direct, and hard hitting. Reaching broad consensus from diverse organizations on public service advertising concepts can be difficult. Advertising agencies typically work with one client with decision-making authority on each account and rely, primarily, on the talent and creativity of their staffs to produce the message strategy. Developing advertising concepts that are acceptable to all members of a partnership may be unrealistic. Defining the terms of the partnership so that they do not require approval for the advertising concepts would create a smoother development process.

2. Well-placed publicity, not public service advertising, may be the most appropriate and effective communications strategy for national nutrition social marketing campaigns. When the issue and the audience changes rapidly, publicity can respond quickly and the message can be tailored to the particular target audience. Publicity can result in communicating more information directly to the target audience and reduce the need for an information hotline or lengthy followup materials.

3. Media monitoring and tracking must be built into the program. Monitoring and tracking the reach and frequency of the media on a regular and timely basis and feeding that back into the campaign allows for early and ongoing modifications of the campaign message and media distribution plan. The media monitoring systems currently available to track public service advertising do not produce data rapidly enough for fast moving campaigns.

4. National campaign strategies and materials have important benefits for State or community programs. The community campaigns benefited from being part of a national program. They relied heavily on the national media generated by the campaign and used and adapted Project LEAN materials. They modeled local special events and programs after events sponsored by the national program. The local campaigns became established quickly and achieved high visibility in their communities because of the link to the national program. The national program was able to provide them early on with important technical assistance in the organization and development of programs that made them more effective.

5. Building a network of State and local programs strengthens and sustains the campaign. The national campaign was enriched by the creative strategies developed at the local level. The community programs tailored and adapted interventions to meet the unique needs of their target populations, leading to a diverse array of strategies that brought local and national visibility to the campaign. Linking a national program to creative community programs is essential to the development of model interventions that can be institutionalized and create real and sustained change.

6. Selection of credible campaign spokespersons strengthens the message. The food professionals made the program unique. They translated the nutrition message into a food message and modeled skills for the public. The food professionals overcame the obstacles to dietary change expressed in the focus groups by communicating a message that is specific, actionable, and fun. They were credible and effective national spokespersons that brought the campaign tremendous national visibility.

7. Partnerships with other organizations is an essential ingredient for success. A broad national coalition, the Partners for Better Health, built valuable and necessary support and credibility for the program. Early participation from government agencies, voluntary, and professional associations generated more widespread involvement for the program on the national and local levels. The power of the message was strengthened by the broad consensus and cooperation built through the coalition. The partners benefited from participating in a quick acting, highly visible national program without having to finance it or work it through their own bureaucracies while Project LEAN benefited from their food, nutrition, and marketing expertise.

8. Collaborations with the private sector expanded the campaign. Collaborations with food associations and food industry provided an opportunity to reach a broader audience. The food media, restaurateurs, grocers, institutional food service, and commodity and food industry associations were targeted through Project LEAN special collaborative events. Co-sponsorship with industry gave the message more credibility with these target audiences. Careful tailoring and explicit guidelines for collaboration produced creative and successful events.

Conclusion

The foundation conceived and developed Project LEAN in order to accelerate the downward trend in dietary fat consumption by stimulating more aggressive action by consumers and retail outlets. Since the outset of this campaign, the dietary fat message has proliferated in the marketplace. Consumer awareness has increased, and the food industry has responded. There is still a need to maintain high visibility for the low-fat message, particularly among low income groups that have not started to change dietary behavior.

Project LEAN accomplished a great deal during the first 3 years of the campaign. The campaign will be continued and new initiatives planned by the National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics of the American Dietetic Association. An evaluation of the community campaigns will be released in 1993. We have learned that a successful national nutrition campaign can be mounted once scientific consensus has been achieved. However, social marketing campaigns of this magnitude are expensive. require a national base of support, flexibility, and a well-conceived formative and summative evaluation. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, the Partners for Better Health, and other advocacy and industry initiatives have helped to change the food and nutrition landscape so that the marketplace is more responsive and consumers are more demanding for healthier choices than previously.

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