Text 85 PEPSI’S NEW HEALTHY DIET: MORE POTATO CHIPS AND SODA

After spending years trying to shift its business toward […] yogurt, vegetable crisps and fruit-and-nut bars, PepsiCo, the world’s largest snackfood company, is back to pushing Pepsi, Doritos and Lay’s.

The company’s chief executive, Ramon Laguarta, says many people are going to continue eating potato chips no matter what […]. So, it is working to make its snacks and drinks a little less bad for you. PepsiCo has been gradually lowering the amount of sodium, saturated fat and sugar in its products, and says it wants to bring them even lower—without consumers noticing.

The new approach is a tough sell to nutrition experts, who link the consumption of ultra-processed foods, salty snacks and sugary drinks to a range of health problems […].

Mr. Laguarta points to the evolution of the company’s […] cola as evidence that his approach is making a difference. In the U.S., a can of full-sugar Pepsi still has 150 calories, or 9.4 teaspoons, of sugar. But in more than a dozen markets including China, France, South Africa and Mexico, it now has 100 calories, or 6 teaspoons […].

Nutrition experts say PepsiCo’s efforts to reduce sugar, sodium and saturated fat could improve public health in the short term, but add that there is a limit to how much salt you can take out of a potato chip before it no longer tastes good. They said long-term public-health gains won’t materialize unless people shift away from ultra-processed foods […].

The number of adults with diabetes tripled over two decades to 537 million, or 10.5% of the global population, in 2021, according to the International Diabetes Federation. Global obesity is on the rise as well, particularly among young people: About 9% of children aged 5 to 19 had obesity in 2020, up from less than 1% in 1975. That rate is expected to more than double to 19% by 2035, according to the World Obesity Federation.

Food companies that sell ultra-processed foods like chips and cookies “are creating products which in reality are killing us slowly,” said […] a nutrition professor at the University of North Carolina […].

PepsiCo pointed out that the WHO has said the food industry can play a significant role in promoting healthy diets by reducing the fat, sugar and salt content of processed foods, among other measures.

In the 2000s, cities and countries around the world began focusing on policies to combat obesity and adopted new taxes on sugary drinks. At the same time, consumers were becoming more health-conscious and started shifting away from soda toward healthier options […]. Many healthy product launches worked but others fizzled. The company found that while many consumers said they wanted to eat healthier, often what they really wanted was potato chips.

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