

USA counts the calories

According to CBS News, around 35 per cent of all Americans are overweight.

Today, one in five children in the US is too heavy, and seven per cent of all American schoolkids are dangerously overweight. Health problems range from heart disease, cancer, stroke to diabetes and cost the US economy around \$147 billion per year.

That is why Obama's Health Care Plan has laws that will give Americans a chance to make healthy choices when they go to restaurants: soon all fast food chains with more than 20 restaurants will have to show calorie information on their menus. So it should change the way people eat.

As Jamie Oliver found out when he tried to promote healthy food in Kentucky, many Americans don't even know what they are eating. Oliver interviewed a mother who was feeding her children on burgers, tortilla chips and Kentucky Fried Chicken, and he was totally shocked: "I want you to know that this is going to kill your children early", he told her.

"When people eat away from home they eat more and they eat worse ... They don't know what's in fast food, and they're often shocked to find out", Brownell, director of the Institute of Food Policy and Obesity at Yale University, told the New York Times. For example, most people don't know that a large glass of Coke has nearly 170 kcal and that Big Mac has 500 kcal.

Since 2004, when Morgan Spurlock's film "Supersize Me" showed the dangers of fast food, restaurants like McDonalds have been working hard to improve their image. Most restaurants want to give people the calorie information they need.

But some Americans are not happy with Obama's new laws, because they think that they have a right to eat what they like and don't want the government to spoil the fun. On the other hand, people also have a right to know what they're getting and many would eat healthier if they were better informed.

However, healthy eating is expensive in the USA. The government pays out \$56 billion per year to corn farmers, but it does not subsidise fruit and vegetable farmers. Corn is needed to make most of the US's cheap and unhealthy foods, so this may not be a good idea. "At the moment you can buy a *Quarter Pounder with Cheese Meal* for less than the cost of buying a bottle of water and a salad", Brownwell told CBS News.

It may also explain why poor Americans are often fatter than rich ones. USA food corporations spend more than \$30 billion on advertising products that are often full of fat, sugar and salt. Some politicians now want junk foods to be taxed just like alcohol and cigarettes, but 60 per cent of Americans are against this idea.

It's not all bad news. Many cities have started their own healthy food campaigns, and they seem to be working. For example Baldwin Park, California, has forbidden some fast foods and drinks from its school dinner plans, and mothers have even started healthy meals like fresh fruit, vegetables and fish at the supermarkets, so that their kids will know what is good for them. Michelle Obama, for example, talks to schoolchildren about healthy food in the White House kitchen garden.

vocabulary-list

to count the calories	→	Kalorien zählen
CBS News	→	American newspaper
to be overweight	→	übergewichtig sein
heart disease	→	Herzbeschwerden
cancer	→	Krebs
stroke	→	Schlaganfall
diabetes	→	Diabetes
economy	→	Wirtschaft
Obama's Health Care Plan	→	Obama's Gesundheitsplan
laws	→	Gesetze
fast food chains	→	Fast Food Ketten
menu	→	Speisekarte
to promote	→	fördern
to feed a child	→	ein Kind füttern
Institute of Food Policy and Obesity	→	Institut für Nahrungsmittel und Fettleibigkeit
to improve their image	→	das Image verbessern
to spoil the fun	→	den Spaß verderben
government	→	Regierung
corn farmers	→	Mais-Bauern
to subsidise	→	bezuschussen
food corporations	→	Nahrungsmittelgesellschaft
advertising	→	Werbung
to be taxed	→	besteuert werden