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By Tom Joyce

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McDonald's extends free fruit campaign



The fast food giant has revealed plans to have fruit giveaway initiatives operating in 19 European countries this year

Last week Eurofruit reported that McDonald's was starting to give out free fruit with each Happy Meal every Friday in the UK, and now the fast food giant has announced that it is extending the campaign across Europe.

'Free Fruit Fridays' was launched in the UK to build on the success of a major initiative set up in France in 2010 known as 'Mercredis à Croquer' (Crunchy Wednesdays), and these campaigns will now be joined by 'Fruitiger Mittwoch' (Fruity Wednesday) in Germany next month.

Over the course of the year, the campaign will eventually cover up to 84 per cent of McDonald's restaurants in Europe, the company revealed.

The move follows the multinational's stated global commitment in September 2013 to increasing its customers' access to fruit and vegetables and boosting awareness of the availability of these items.

Pierre Woreczek, senior vice-president and chief brand & strategy officer at McDonald's Europe, commented: "Parents tell us that it can be a challenge to get children to eat fruit and vegetables so we want to help to make fruit more accessible, affordable and appealing. One of the most powerful things we can do at McDonald's is to make eating fruit and veg fun, for example, by using our brand and licensed characters on packaging.

"We also try to present fruit creatively – for example, kiwi on a stick – which makes it easier and more exciting for kids to eat and hold. All our restaurants already offer fruit or vegetables and many have done this for over a decade so this campaign just takes our commitment one step further."

The French initiative has seen free fruit being offered with every Happy Meal sold on the first Wednesday of each month, and its success has been impressive.

In total, almost 10m packs of fruit have

been given away, while the volume of fruit sold with Happy Meals between 2010 and 2013 increased by 58 per cent. According to the company, more than half of fruit consumed in French restaurants by children aged 3-8 years is eaten at McDonald's.

"Our experience in France shows that we can make an impact by encouraging balanced diets and hopefully creating lifelong habits of fruit consumption," explained Woreczek.

Giveaways have also been trialled by McDonald's in Portugal, Italy and Malta. In Portugal, over 650,000 portions of fruit have apparently been given away since 2012.

This new campaign will see fruit given away for free in 19 countries in Europe, with the type of fruit varying by country and seasonality. In the Baltics, McDonald's is planning to give away whole apples, while in Russia it wants to offer a mix of apple slices and grapes. In the UK, giveaways currently include

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apple slices and grape bags, before a planned switch to pineapple sticks in the summer.

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