

PUBLIC HEALTH & THE JOY OF FOOD

HOW THE SWEDISH FOOD INDUSTRY IS
WORKING TO PROMOTE GOOD EATING
AND LIFE HABITS

THE SWEDISH FOOD FEDERATION

FOREWORD



Food and drink for a healthy Sweden

The food industry is important to Sweden. Our 800 member companies employ 50,000 people, from Malmö in the south of Sweden to Kiruna in the far north, generate an annual turnover of SEK 195 billion and export goods valued at SEK 60 billion. In combination with other life habits, the food and drinks the companies produce have a major impact on people's health and well-being.

That is why Swedish food producers – from the small, family-owned artisan bakery on the corner to multinational food giants with production facilities all over the world – work hard every day to make sure the food and drinks we consume maintain the highest

levels of quality, taste fantastic, are sustainably produced and make it easy, fun and attractive to eat and live healthily.

In this brochure the industry and employer organization Swedish Food Federation present how we and our members work with food and health. We summarize our positions, highlight several key issues and present some of the many initiatives and activities that the industry and companies are working with in the field of food and health.

To find out more, visit
livsmedelsforetagen.se/in-english/

INTRODUCTION



How we are working to improve public health

In partnership with our members, we at the Swedish Food Federation have defined five areas of special significance. Together, they describe how the Swedish food industry views and is working to promote healthier eating and life habits – for everyone.

1. **A WIDE RANGE OF GOOD, HEALTHY FOOD AND DRINKS**
2. **TOGETHER TOWARDS GOOD EATING AND LIFE HABITS**
3. **VOLUNTARY MEASURES FOR SUSTAINABLE RESULTS**
4. **ON A SCIENTIFIC BASIS**
5. **LABELLING ENABLES GOOD CHOICES**

The Swedish Food Federation's Nutrition Group was established in 1999. The group comprises around 20 representatives from the industry, all with broad and deep knowledge in the field of food and health. The Nutrition Group runs activities, identifies strategically important issues and plays a key role as an expert adviser to the Swedish Food Federation.





AREA ONE

A broad range of good, healthy food and drinks

Swedish food companies offer a wide range of good, healthy products that make it easier for consumers to make conscious choices that suit their preferences, lifestyles, and needs. This is one of the ways that our industry works to improve public health and promote joy of food – for everyone.



Food producers in Sweden are continuously reviewing the content of salt and sugar, increasing the use of health-promoting ingredients such as whole grain and vegetables, and developing Keyhole-labelled products*.

The range for people with special needs – elderly people, children, and people with allergies for example – is growing and improving every year. Through research and development, individually or in sector-wide projects, companies are developing new methods, techniques, and ingredients to improve product composition and to

develop new products without compromising on taste. This research is very costly, which is why targeted government investments are crucial.

*THE KEYHOLE LABEL IS THE SWEDISH FOOD AGENCY'S SYMBOL THAT HELPS CONSUMER IDENTIFY HEALTHIER OPTIONS WHEN BUYING FOOD.



CUTTING DOWN ON SUGAR SINCE 2004

The Norrmejerier dairy co-operative has long been working proactively with food and health issues. They started enriching their yoghurt and milk products with extra vitamin D back in 2014, four years before it became law to do so. And as early as 2004, they implemented a sugar policy which states, for example, that they must always offer a natural alternative in their curdled milk and yoghurt ranges, and that sugar should be limited as far as possible.

“When this policy was introduced, we cut the sugar content by up to 25 percent. Today, we have almost halved the amount of sugar used in many of our products. It can be a challenge to create a great taste when the sugar level drops to five or six percent, so we’ve been reducing the level gradually to find the right balance. We’re delighted to say that the consumers have stuck with us,” says Anna-Karin Karlsson, Director of Sustainability.

NYHLÉNS HUGOSONS IS BALANCING THE SALT

In 2015, the Norrland-based meat and charcuterie company Nyhléns Hugosons launched an overhaul of its product range. Thus far, the work has resulted in a reduction of more than ten percent in salt content, a halving of the additives used, and an increase in the meat content of certain products.

“This effort has made our products even tastier; at the same time, we hope it

has helped us make a real contribution to improving public health and promoting a more balanced diet here in Norrland. It feels good deep down to work with these issues. We do a lot of work behind the scenes in the areas of sustainability and health. The local aspect is important to us: we mainly use meat from Norrland farmers, and we’ve started to work more with tastes from the surrounding nature such as lingonberries and spruce shoots”, says Magnus Nilsson, CEO.





AREA TWO

Together towards good eating and life habits

Healthy eating habits are one piece of the puzzle for good public health. Other life habits, such as physical activity and sleep habits, also have a significant effect, as do socioeconomic factors. Together with other stakeholders, we are contributing to long-term change.



The issue of public health is broad and complex. Public health cannot be improved simply by making available a wide range of nutritious foods; it is also important to promote healthy eating habits together with physical activity and good sleep. Socioeconomic conditions have been proven to have a major influence on people's eating and life habits. Improving public health for everyone therefore requires long-term commitment and collaboration between many different societal stakeholders, where the public sector has a key role. Public health is a societal issue that can only be

solved by all areas of society working together. It is too big for any single stakeholder to tackle alone. The Swedish Food Federation and our member companies are working to promote good eating habits and to increase the understanding of the complex relationship between life habits, eating habits and health.



BASKETBALL FOR ALL WITH LOKA HEROES

Through their Loka Heroes scheme, Spendrups and the Swedish Basketball Association are looking to contribute to improved health and diversity. Almost 2,000 people have already played basketball in projects that have all been launched by a local firebrand. 14 projects are currently under way, focusing on everything from involving girls from the suburbs, to opening up opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to participate in sports.



BREAKFAST AT SCHOOL MAKES A DIFFERENCE

What effect does a daily breakfast have on schoolchildren? To find out, in the spring of 2018 the dairy co-operative Arla served two high school classes in Botkyrka breakfast in their classrooms during school time every day for three months. Maja Nordström oversaw the project which among other things had a positive effect on the pupils' life quality and capacity to concentrate, and helped create a calm, much-appreciated start to the day.



HELPING TEENS RESIST PEER PRESSURE

In 2018, alcohol consumption among ninth grade classes was 39 percent, compared to 69 percent in 2006 – when the Prata om Alkohol (Talk About Alcohol) scheme was launched by among others The Spirit and Wine Suppliers Association and the Swedish Brewers Association. The initiative builds on conversation-based teaching to help young people learn to resist peer pressure and say no to alcohol. When the method was evaluated in 2017, it was shown to reduce the likelihood of risk behavior linked to alcohol.



AREA THREE

Voluntary measures for sustainable results

Voluntary measures generate genuine engagement, boost incentives for innovation, and reinforce competitive strength in the Swedish food industry. This creates conditions for long-term, durable, and positive effects.



Health is a high-priority issue for the Swedish food industry, and it permeates everything from product development to communication. In sector-wide projects such as ReduSalt and the Whole Grain partnership (Fullkornspartnerskapet), food companies work together to improve public health. Health is also one of the five missions of the Sweden Food Arena, the national research and innovation arena. We are happy to work with the government and authorities to establish conditions for a healthier Sweden. However, the way we see it, measures such as targeted taxes – which generate no positive effect on public health – are

the wrong way to go. Rather, we believe that the most effective approach to making a long-term difference is through voluntary measures. Enforced regulations often have unintended negative consequences and reduce the incentive for companies to focus on innovation, partnerships, and a proactive approach.



JOINT RESEARCH TO REDUCE SALT

A sector-wide working relationship on the issue of salt content was launched as early as 2011. This laid the groundwork for what would become ReduSalt in 2015, a project that has resulted in methods for reducing the salt content of foods. In the next phase, these methods are to be implemented in collaboration with participating partners including Atria, Orkla and Lyckeby Culinar.

"There is no single method for reducing salt content that is suitable for all kinds of products, given that different foods feature different properties. To verify the methods developed, we selected four different demonstration products that are all sources of salt in the Swedish diet: bread, sausages, tomato sauce and a spice mix. We succeeded in reducing the salt content in them by between 20 and 44 percent," says Tim Nielsen, researcher at Research Institutes of Sweden (RISE) and project manager for ReduSalt.

VIVELS GETTING US TO EAT MORE WHOLE GRAIN

The baking company Vivels is working to encourage people to eat more whole grain and fibre, partly within the framework of the Brödinstitutet (Bread Institute) information campaign devoted to highlighting the health benefits of whole grain. Together with among others Chalmers, Fazer, and Pågen, Brödinstitutet is also participating in a collaborative project launched in 2018 with the aim of establishing a Swedish whole grain partnership. To date, Vivels'

initiative has resulted in an increase of around 12 percent in sales of bread rich in whole grain.

"We've used labels from Brödinstitutet with information about bread, whole grain and gluten, passing it on to our customers. In addition, almost all our new bread products contain whole grain flour. It is possible to mix flour so that even those people who aren't all that keen on whole grain can eat it. We want to help raise the level of public health, and this is an area where we easily can contribute and make a real difference," says Benjamin Fritzdorf at Vivels.





AREA FOUR

On a scientific basis

The work to promote healthier eating and living habits must be long-term and based on facts. By taking science and evidence as the starting point for product development and communication, we make a real difference to public health in Sweden.



The dietary advice from the Swedish Food Agency and the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR) rest firmly on a solid foundation of science and form the basis of the food industry's work to promote healthier eating habits. By always informing from a fact-based perspective – through use of the Nutritionfakta.se knowledge portal, for example – we can increase knowledge about food and health. An evidence-based approach needs to be used by all actors working for better public health. To know where efforts primarily should be focused and to be able to measure the effects of such

efforts, more high-quality dietary surveys are needed.



FINDUS DEVELOPING HEALTHY FOOD FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE

What constitutes healthy food is different to different people. In Sweden, around eight percent of adults – many of them elderly – have difficulty chewing and swallowing. More than 60 percent of the over 65s are undernourished or in the risk zone. Ewa Hansson, Special Foods Sales Manager at Findus and a registered dietician, works specifically with this target group.

"We provide training for care workers and kitchen staff in consistency-adapted diets and how to increase the nutritional value of food so that a small portion contains as much energy and nutrition as possible, with great emphasis on how the food is presented. We have a portfolio of products with different consistencies, from smooth purées to timbales and coarse pâtés. The objective is to ensure that no matter what's on the menu, it must be possible to adapt the dishes so that people who need a different consistency can be served the same meal as everyone else."

LANTMÄNNEN INVEST IN RESEARCH

Research plays a key role in how the Lantmännen co-operative works with health. Every year, their research foundation donates SEK 25 million to health-related research. One high-priority area is the positive health effects of cereals and legumes, which among other things has resulted in innovative products such as bean pasta and rye snacks.

"Eating more whole grain products has proved to be one

of the strongest evidence-based choices you can make for your health. For us, it entails providing tasty whole grain products that make it easier for consumers to make healthy choices. When we launched our Finncrisp Snacks, our focus was on whole grain, fibre and – specifically – rye, with the intention of coming up with a healthier alternative for situations that have traditionally been dominated by other snacks," says Lovisa Martin Marais, Nutrition Manager at Lantmännen R&D.





AREA FIVE

Labelling enables good choices

Clear and simple labelling of foods is a key precondition for helping people to make conscious decisions based on their personal needs. Today, opportunities for labelling foods with healthy messages are still far too limited.



Labelling that clarifies the healthy properties of foods and nutrients is an important tool in promoting better eating habits. Labelling guides people to healthier choices in shops and provides companies with an incentive to develop more health-promoting products and to check the recipes for their existing range. Today, however, opportunities for labelling and marketing foods with healthy messages are limited on account of overly restrictive and complex legislation, which hinders innovation and sometimes

conceals the full extent of companies' contributions. Sweden needs to play a more prominent role in lobbying for improved EU regulations in this area. The industry also calls for an ambitious investment in the Keyhole symbol in partnership with other Nordic countries, not only to increase the number of labelled products, but also to boost interest among consumers.



KEYHOLE

The Keyhole is the Swedish Food Agency's symbol to help consumers make more healthy choices. The Keyhole label indicates that the product contains less sugar and salt, more whole grain and fibre, and less – or more beneficial – fat in that particular food group.



HANDBOOKS ON LABELLING

The Swedish Food Federation has published the Handboken om närings- och hälsopåståenden (Handbook on nutrition and health claims) and Märkningshandboken (Labelling Handbook) to make it easier for food producers to make use of healthy messages and to do so in a clear, responsible and balanced manner. Clear and straightforward labelling plays a key role in helping consumers make conscious choices.



THE DIETARY ADVICE GUIDE

One way for the food industry to provide inspiration for healthy eating habits is to communicate the Swedish Food Agency's solidly science grounded dietary advice. This advice can be communicated on packaging and on shelves in shops, in advertisements and on websites. To help companies make use of this dietary advice, the Swedish Food Federation created Kostrådsguiden, a web-based dietary advice guide found at www.kostradsguiden.se.



**A FIRM GRASP OF
FOOD AND HEALTH**

Elisabet Rytter has a PhD in nutrition and is responsible for research and nutrition at the Swedish Food Federation. She is the convener of our Nutrition Group and our reference group for research and development, with which she works on issues such as the contribution made by the industry to good eating habits and the promotion of research and innovation.

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**KNOWS ALL ABOUT
LABELLING**

Ulrika Ehrhardt knows all about food legislation, labelling, allergy issues and foods for special nutritional purposes. Through consultancy and education, she keeps our member companies up to date with the latest information in the area.

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**EXPERT ON EU
LEGISLATION**

Nicklas Amelin is our expert on the ground in Brussels. He keeps a close eye on everything that's happening and makes sure that issues of importance to the food industry are given a hearing and make an impact. 95 percent of Swedish food legislation originates in EU regulations, and almost half of all EU laws and regulations apply to foods.

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