



# Solutions Menu

A Nordic guide to  
sustainable food policy

Sustainability

Waste

Meals

Culture

Nutrition





## **Solutions Menu – A Nordic guide to sustainable food policy**

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### **Nordic co-operation**

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Shared Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

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# **Solutions Menu**

A Nordic guide to  
sustainable food policy

Editor-in-chief: Afton Halloran  
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# An insider's perspective on Nordic food policy

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What is the best way to make sure that all children have equal access to nutritional food? What are the best ways to instil a greater sense of food culture and identity and what societal benefits can it bring? What is the best way to transition to diets that are better for us and for the health of the planet?

One approach is through food policy.

For the first time, the most innovative food policy solutions in the Nordic Region have been collated in a single document. This Solutions Menu covers nutrition, food culture and identity, public food and meals, food waste and sustainable diets. It includes 24 policy examples – from local, national and regional levels – designed to trigger new conversations and inspire new policies in other parts of the world. Each solution represents a tangible step to address a specific issue; together they represent a new and holistic approach to food policy. They are also testament to the fact that soft policies can deliver solutions and play a significant role in pursuing ambitious national and international goals.

## **Better nutrition is a collective responsibility**

The Nordic Nutrition Recommendations form the basis for all Nordic co-operation on nutrition and for national dietary guidelines. A monitoring system provides data on the status of and trends in diet, physical activity and overweight among adults and children. The Keyhole front-of-package nutritional label – used in four of the five Nordic countries – has a solid track record, guiding consumers to make better choices and encouraging the food industry to reformulate their products. Combating negative nutritional trends, like the overconsumption of salt and under-consumption of whole grains, is facilitated by partnerships between public, private and civil society partners. Voluntary nutrition commitments help address the challenges unhealthy diets pose to society. This form of multisectoral partnership also helps consumers make dietary choices that comply with nutritional recommendations.

## **How New Nordic became the new normal**

The first major sign of political interest in supporting Nordic food culture and identity came after a group of 12 chefs signed the New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto in 2004. Support for bottom-up processes and innovation in the

food-service sector have been a priority for Nordic co-operation ever since. National strategies have subsequently been drawn up, using food as a tool not only for attracting tourism, supporting artisans, improving hospitality, national branding and sustainable growth but also to consolidate new principles for Nordic food identity based on sustainability and good health. National resource centres spread information about local food culture, develop capacity to produce artisan food and collate important data about food behaviour trends. At the local government level, councils see food as the next frontier of the creative economy and a way of adding to the urban experience.

## **Placing meals front and centre**

Mealtimes provide a daily platform to promote better eating habits, engage and educate, as well as to promote social eating. National school meal programmes in the Region date back to the 1940s and now focus on nutritional equality, healthy eating habits and the use of food as a pedagogical tool. The 'Copenhagen model' demonstrates that it is possible to increase the availability and affordability of organic food in public institutions and support the retail market for organic products through the push-pull mechanism of public procurement. Various examples of meal models and labels focus on well-being and nutrition through meals,



# The secret ingredients

The 24 innovative policy solutions contained in this Solutions Menu have been possible and highly successful because they are:

## **Evidence-based**

focusing on the most robust and current data at hand

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## **Democratic**

fostering equality by making good food affordable and accessible

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## **Progressive**

promoting innovation and fresh perspectives

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## **Open**

enabling collaboration and dialogue to address complex issues

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## **Holistic**

accounting for the interconnectivities between policy solutions and global challenges

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## **Sustainable**

safeguarding the health of humankind and the planet

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Overall, the policies in the Solutions Menu are non-invasive, i.e. they often meet less resistance because they are co-developed and have multiple benefits for stakeholders involved.

rather than just the nutritional properties of single food items.

## Taking the bite out of food waste

Civil society has played a significant role in putting food waste on the political agenda. At the Nordic level, the underlying causes of food waste in primary production systems, the potential for food redistribution and the impact of date labelling have been studied in depth. National initiatives are also in place to meet the UN SDG target of 50% global reduction in food waste at the retail and consumer levels and to reduce food loss in the production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses, by 2030. Food waste partnerships and networks hold all stakeholders accountable and set ambitious targets.

## At the frontier of food policy

The transition to more sustainable diets is the next frontier for food policy. Governments have only just started to use dietary models to promote human health and the health of the planet. The Nordic Nutrition Recommendations, as well as national dietary guidelines, have started to recommend more plant-based healthy diets that also have less environmental impact. National climate mitigation strategies are also starting to make the much-needed connection

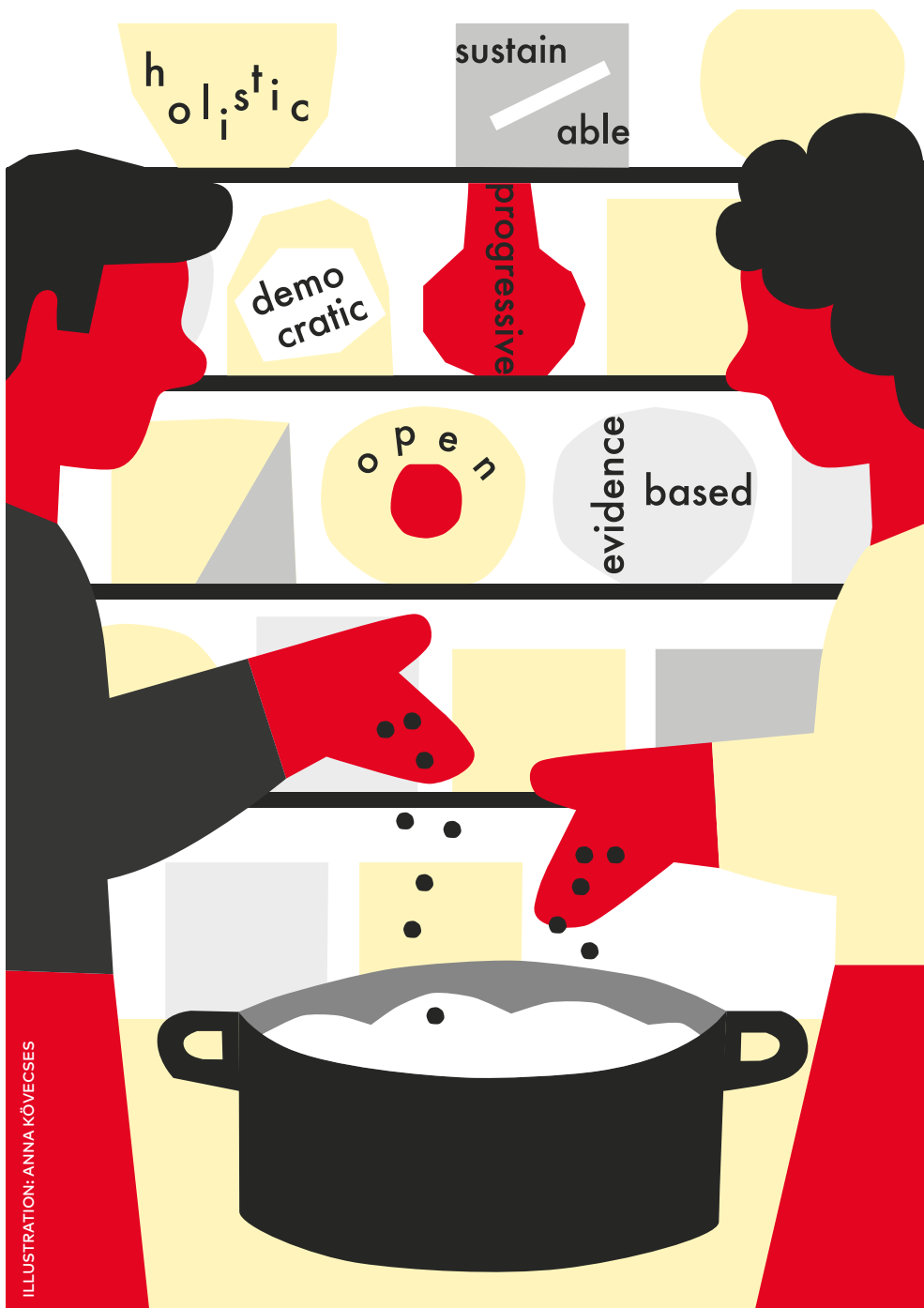
between sustainable consumption and production. Despite these efforts, there is a long road ahead. Lessons can be learned from other fields and translated into policies to tackle the problems of tomorrow.

## Nordic Food Policy Lab

The *Solutions Menu – A Nordic guide to sustainable food policy* is produced by the Nordic Food Policy Lab, one of six flagship projects under the Nordic prime ministers' initiative, Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges. By collecting, curating and sharing Nordic food policy solutions, our aim is to inspire ambitious action on UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

*Read on, find inspiration and get in touch to share your ideas and your own policy solutions!*

@nordfoodpol  
[www.norden.org/foodpolicylab](http://www.norden.org/foodpolicylab)



### The 'secret ingredients'

The Nordic approaches to food policy are: evidence-based, democratic, progressive, open, holistic and sustainable.

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# Setting the table

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When telling the story of food policy in action, it makes sense to start with the humble kale. Kale is a real superfood: sustainable, relatively cheap, packed with vitamins and possible to grow in conditions as low as  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ . However, for decades kale consumption was in decline, abandoned by consumers. Until recently. Today sales of fresh kale are on the rise – alongside cabbage, root vegetables and other Nordic classics. This is just one of many areas where the Nordic countries seem to have turned a corner and begun changing food habits – to the benefit of public health, the environment and the local economies.

The document you are reading will highlight Nordic policy solutions that have been influential in the emergence of a new Nordic food culture. Policies that strengthen the demand for vegetables, whole grains and other healthy, sustainable choices. Policies that aim to limit food waste and the environmental impact of food consumption. And, as you will see, some of them – albeit sometimes behind the scenes – have even helped draw consumers' attention to kale and move it front of mind.

## Why a solutions menu?

Tackling major global challenges requires multiple tactics. The Solutions Menu is a selection of some of the most innovative food policies coming out of the Nordic countries. This is not about boasting but rather about sharing, inspiring and demonstrating how new policies can bring about change. While the Nordic context may be different from other regional or national contexts, food is a unique way to start conversations about complex issues – something that can really get the ball of progress rolling.

Just as a restaurant menu communicates the selection of food and drink on offer, the Solutions Menu communicates some of the different policies that have been implemented in the Nordic Region. While menus list the available options, what they don't show you is the recipe. In a similar way, policies are context specific; each policy-making context is uniquely different, and each decision-making body has its own recipes for how to devise policy-based solutions to global challenges. As such, the Solutions Menu is an inspirational, living document – one that demonstrates how the Nordic countries have developed policies that respond to societal change and promote sustainable food systems.

Food touches on so many issues, including livelihoods, human and planetary health, identity and economic growth. By addressing issues surrounding food through policy, many double-wins can be achieved, such as job creation and

healthier diets or environmentally or climate-friendly meals and improved educational models. The Solutions Menu explains the who, what, where, and why behind some of most innovative and timely policies that have been developed in the Nordic Region, in addition to explaining how these policies align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement and other global strategies.

## Food policy in a Nordic context

Food policy solutions come in many shapes and sizes, ranging from government programmes delivering healthy and sustainable school meals, to public-private partnerships on the promotion of healthier products, to support for radical bottom-up innovations that lay the foundations of a new food identity.

The success of Nordic food policy solutions is partly due to the values that underpin the interactions between people, institutions and businesses in the Region, which has comprehensive social safety nets and welfare services, high and equal standards of living, strong civil societies and flat organisational structures that foster trust, individual responsibility and co-operation. These are all undoubtedly factors that play a role in how Nordic food policy solutions are being developed and implemented. But while some tend to focus on Nordic exceptionalism, asserting that the





ILLUSTRATION: ANNA KÓVECSES

### **Meeting the challenges**

The five themes contained in the Solutions Menu – nutrition, culture, meals, waste and sustainability – are all interconnected. When done right, food policy can offer an integrated way of tackling global challenges such as climate change, inequality and rapid urbanisation and help create solutions that are cross-cutting and complementary.

Region has particular societal structures that make it pointless for other countries to seek inspiration from and model national policies on examples from this part of the world, we want to emphasise the elements, characteristics and lessons that might inspire other countries and that can be implemented in non-Nordic contexts. As you will find as you go along, many of the examples shared here have universal potential.

It's also worth noting that, in terms of food systems, the Nordic countries hardly constitute a single homogeneous region. On the contrary, the geographical properties of the countries are extremely diverse, ranging from long coastlines with a heavy focus on fishing in the north-west, to open pastures surrounded by dense forests in Finland and the Scandinavian mainland, to vast fields and intensive farming in the south. As a result, we have very different food production systems throughout the Region as well as different approaches to policy objectives in agriculture and fisheries.

In terms of close-to-consumer food policies i.e. policies that are made in close connection to consumers or that directly address consumers, the story is quite different because Nordic consumers expect similarly high standards from their food supply. This report presents a range of innovative policy solutions, all of which are based on shared Nordic approaches which are evidence-based, democratic, progressive, open, holistic and sustainable (see page 9).

In recent years Nordic governments are – with some exceptions – reluctant to use hard policy interventions such as taxation and regulation in tackling the complex problems related to food consumption. Rather, solutions are sought in softer policies through co-operation with the food industry and civil society organisations, and through holistic approaches that use more than one intervention and perspective at the same time. For example, children's health might be targeted by providing foods with improved nutritional value, developing a holistic vision for school meals, providing food education for parents and including information about healthy food choices in physical education. All of which combine to establish a strong basis for kids to make healthier choices.

## **Why does food policy matter?**

Policy – an invisible yet potent force – influences how we access our food, how and what we eat, and even what we throw away. At its most obvious level, it shapes our relationships with food by, for example, preventing us from making unhealthy decisions. Less straightforward, perhaps, is the impact it can have on people and the environment on other continents by setting the standards for trade and the use of natural resources, both near and far.

# What is the *Solutions Menu*: *A Nordic Guide to Sustainable Food Policy* meant to achieve?

1.

## **Demonstrate**

how the Nordic governments have used policy in response to scientific evidence and/or consumer demands to implement more sustainable and healthy food systems

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2.

## **Highlight**

the momentum that has been created around food policy for sustainable and healthy development in the Nordic countries

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3.

## **Share**

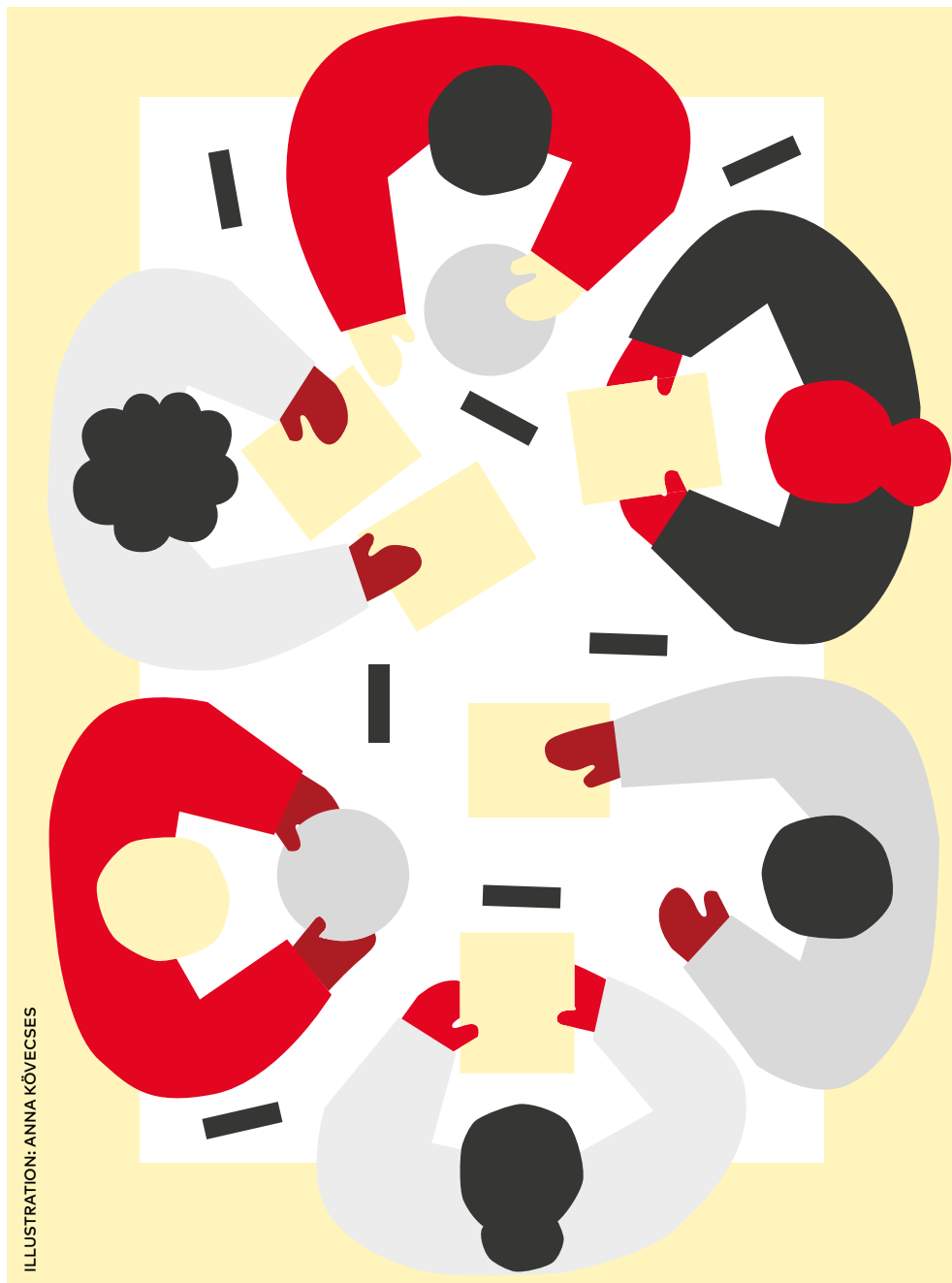
Nordic food policy solutions as an inspiration for national and local governments developing, changing and/or implementing policy related to healthy and sustainable food production and consumption

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4.

## **Ignite**

new conversations, actions and partnerships that create policy-based solutions to sustainable and healthy food systems



### Setting the table

The inclusion of a wide spectrum of stakeholders is an essential part of developing long-lasting and impactful food policies. Bringing everyone to the table can be challenging given the need to balance and address different perspectives. But as the Solutions Menu shows, dialogue and partnerships can help secure wide-scale buy-in and more robust policies.

In prosperous periods and times of abundance it is easy to forget how important food policy really is. But looking back over the course of human history, we see how it has dramatically shaped human civilisation. From monarchs to dictators to prime ministers, those unable to provide sufficient food supplies have often been brought down by revolt, revolution or losing elections.

Today, food is tightly intertwined with complex issues like environmental degradation, climate change, cultural identity, animal welfare and health. This means that there are no quick fixes. But when done properly, food policies offer an integrated way to address some of the major global challenges we face. They can help to alter our diet to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, for example, and help to prevent loss of biodiversity and address the rising global threat from non-communicable diseases.

## Who might benefit from the Solutions Menu?

- Governments and ministries seeking inspiration, and behind-the-scenes advice, on how to design and execute innovative food-related policies
- International agencies looking for examples of the successful implementation of sustainable food policies that address the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Researchers from, for example, food- and policy-related disciplines

- Civil society organisations, NGOs, grassroots organisations and special interest groups looking for new ways to shape societal change through food
- Consumers and activists in search of bottom-up policies showcasing the inclusion of a range of stakeholder groups

## What to expect

The Solutions Menu has five chapters on different themes: 1) Nutrition; 2) Food culture and identity; 3) Public food and meals; 4) Food waste; and 5) Sustainable diets. Each chapter highlights some of the most ***innovative, close-to-the-consumer and internationally relevant*** policy solutions. Each chapter provides a general overview of the history of the solutions as well as the stakeholders involved, the development of the solution, the mechanisms behind it, key characteristics and outcomes.

# Footnotes

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# Strengthening Food Culture and Identity

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### The Museum of Food

This art piece encourages reflection and debate about food policy interventions for behaviour change by simulating a future where some of our favourite foods are gone. The Museum of Food is a collaboration between ArtRebels and the Nordic Food Policy Lab. Find out more here: [norden.org/foodpolicylab](http://norden.org/foodpolicylab)



# Solutions Menu

A Nordic guide to  
sustainable food policy



# Nordic Nutrition

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The Nordic countries have had ambitious nutrition policies for more than 80 years. Each country has its own history in terms of the development and implementation of nutrition policy, but a range of commonalities have led to a similar outlook on the role of the state in influencing the health of citizens.

The history of nutrition policies in the Nordic Region has been influenced by the welfare state – one of the principles of which is that the government helps promote equality. Nutritional composition data and monitoring have also been used to develop Nordic nutrition policies.

In the 1930s, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway established *expert-based nutritional councils* to provide advice on public health issues and nutrition education.<sup>1</sup> During the 1940s, national school lunch programmes were introduced in Finland<sup>2</sup> and school lunches became widespread throughout Sweden.<sup>3</sup> The rise of chronic diseases such as coronary disease in the post-war period led to policies and initiatives that aimed to improve diets and encourage physical exercise. By the 1980s, national food policies had been developed to various degrees and the first *Nordic Nutrition Recommendations* were released.<sup>4</sup> Important *labelling programmes* were also introduced during this period, including the Keyhole Label in Sweden<sup>5</sup> and salt labelling in Finland.<sup>6</sup> Deliberate political decisions made *nutritional goals an explicit part of health policy* in the Nordic Region between the 1970s and 1990s.<sup>7</sup> This increased the demand for a strong evidence base to guide policy-making that led to nutrition being taken more seriously as a discipline<sup>8</sup> as well as better funding for studies and the monitoring of

interventions. In the new millennium, the Nordic governments established several *public-private partnerships* to address the need for healthier diets, including multi-stakeholder partnerships to increase the intake of whole grains<sup>9</sup> and reducing the intake of salt.<sup>10</sup> More recently, *environmental sustainability* has been a recurring theme in national and regional plans of action for nutrition and dietary guidelines.<sup>11</sup> While taxes on sugar and fat have come and gone in the Region since the 1920s, the Norwegian government took a bold step and increased its *sugar tax* in 2018 by nearly 83%.<sup>12</sup> Sugar intake, however, remains high among less educated people throughout the Nordics.<sup>13</sup>

## Nordic diets aren't perfect, yet

Compared to other high-income countries, the Nordic countries have, on average, lower rates of overweight and obesity in children and adults.<sup>14</sup> This, however, does not mean that

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**Food comes from the environment and food is society. This holistic view of nutrition runs through the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations – as they link health, environment, society and culture. This integration of multiple concerns is excellent**

**Tim Lang**  
Professor of Food Policy,  
Centre for Food Policy  
at City University London



Nordic citizens are free from the challenges associated with unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and non-communicable diseases. Overall, Nordic citizens do not consume enough fruit and vegetables and eat a diet too high in salt, sugar and saturated fat.<sup>15</sup> Children and young people also eat too much sugar.<sup>16</sup> A 2017 report established that the proportion of adults in the Nordic Region with an unhealthy diet was a little over 20% and had increased slightly from 2011 to 2014.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, current trends show that many Nordic consumers want to change their unhealthy dietary habits and eat a more balanced diet,<sup>18</sup> and also that **producing healthy food products can be good business**.<sup>19</sup> The 2011-2014 Nordic Monitoring

System report found that the Nordic countries seem to be turning things round, and the rise in overweight and obesity have started to level off in both adults and children.<sup>20</sup>

## Partnering for better nutrition

**Co-operation** is the key to making healthy food accessible and desirable. Since the 1980s, the Nordic Council of Ministers has supported **extensive regional collaboration** on nutrition-related issues, with the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR) being one of the most important contributions. In addition to

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*Research has demonstrated that the New Nordic diet and Mediterranean diets are health-promoting and can help tackle noncommunicable diseases. But changing course requires effective, joint efforts on nutrition. The Nordics have really shown the potential of collaborative, cross-country policy-making*

**João Breda**

Head of the World Health Organization Europe Office  
for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases

the NNR, The Nordic Council of Ministers has agreed upon a common Nordic Plan of Action on Health, Food and Physical Activity and established a basic **common monitoring programme**,<sup>21</sup> which ensures that data is collected to track and compare Nordic eating habits in selected years. While national monitoring is also carried out, common Nordic monitoring enables **benchmarking** and allows the countries to learn from one another in terms of survey years, age groups, education levels and countries. The ability to make national comparisons generates **positive peer pressure**.<sup>22</sup>

The Nordic countries participate actively in international policy dialogues aimed at improving nutrition and leaving no one behind. They also benchmark their progress against international indicators and agendas such as the WHO Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (2013–2020) and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025). Nutrition policies in the Nordic countries also complement to the UN SDGs.

## Featured Nordic nutrition policy solutions

This chapter presents the following selected Nordic nutrition policy solutions:

- Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR): agreement on the facts
- Nordic Plan of Action and the Nordic Monitoring System: setting long-term goals
- Keyhole Label: making it easier to promote healthier food
- Salt partnerships and salt labelling: helping the food industry to cut down on salt
- Whole Grain Partnership: expanding the market for whole grains
- Meal initiatives: nutrition in the context of meals
- Nutrition commitments: broadening the range of healthy food products
- Monitoring food marketing to children: halting obesity and overweight

## *Solution #1*

NORDIC NUTRITION  
RECOMMENDATIONS (NNR)

# Agreement on \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ facts

# Explore how top-down and bottom-up initiatives define contemporary Nordic food culture and identity

## Quick facts

Started in 1980  
Published approximately every eight years  
Last update published in 2012 (taking three years from start to publication)

## Objective

To use the best available scientific evidence to create a common reference document on diets that provide energy and nutrients for optimal growth, development, function and health throughout life.

## Stakeholders

The process of drawing up the NNR is funded by the Nordic countries and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The work is done by a joint Nordic working group. Input from 100+ stakeholders is included.

## Key outcomes

The NNR is the basis on which the food industry, retailers, civil society organisations and official agencies work together on nutrition. The NNR 2012 has been downloaded over 75,000 times. It has been referred to in national dietary guidelines on four continents.

## Budget

The Nordic Council of Ministers provided approximately €900,000\* in funding to develop the NNR in 2012.  
(\*not including national contributions).

## *Solution #1*

### **Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR): Agreement on the facts**

The Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR) provide reference values for the intake of and balance between individual nutrients and translate these into food-based dietary guidelines adapted to a Nordic setting. The NNR is a single set of integrated, concise recommendations for different nutrients and physical activity and explain the meaning of various groups of food and meal patterns. The NNR also gives recommendations for specific age groups, most notably healthy children and the elderly.

The NNR is based on cumulative knowledge from systematic reviews by the expert steering group, including a quality assessment of all pertinent studies and a grading of the overall evidence base. In the case of the NNR 2012, the systematic reviews covered selected nutrients/topics for the years 2000–2012.

The NNR serve as the scientific basis for national food and nutrition policy in the Nordic countries, as well as the planning and evaluation of diets, teaching and dietary information. National authorities translate the recommendations into guidelines that can be adjusted depending on the challenges of each individual country. The NNR also forms the scientific basis for developing dietary guidelines for different population groups with slightly different nutritional needs, due mainly to their physiological needs and/or environment. These include recommendations, for example, for the elderly, hospital patients, families, schools and day-care centres.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps more surprisingly, the NNR also serves as the common reference point for almost all partners in the Nordic food system – from health campaigners to the food industry. It also serves as the foundation for the criteria developed for the Nordic nutritional label, the Keyhole (see Solution #3). The high level of trust in the NNR at national and regional levels is due to its strong grounding in science, as well as the collaborative and open nature of the process. This also explains the widespread impact the NNR has had. The NNR also forms the foundation for partnerships and international co-operation, contributing important data to international nutritional policy.



#### **FURTHER READING:**

**Nordic Nutrition Recommendations:**  
[www.nordicnutrition.org](http://www.nordicnutrition.org)

## *Solution #2*

### NORDIC PLAN OF ACTION AND THE NORDIC MONITORING SYSTEM

Setting  
long  
term  
goals

# Learn how to implement and monitor ambitious goals to improve health and nutrition

## Quick facts

Nordic Plan of Action on Health, Food and Physical Activity: 2006–2021  
Nordic Monitoring System: 2007 to present

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## Objective

To establish common goals for reducing the negative consequences of an unhealthy diet and lifestyle, and to monitor diet, physical activity and weight problems in the Nordic Region.

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## Stakeholders

The Nordic Plan of Action is approved by the Nordic ministers of health and food. The Nordic Monitoring System is implemented by Nordic research institutions and run by the Danish Technical University.

## Solution #2

### Nordic Plan of Action and the Nordic Monitoring System: setting long-term goals

The Nordic Plan of Action on Health, Food and Physical Activity emphasises the importance of collaboration and synergies between policy areas to improve the health and quality of life for all. The Nordic Action Plan set out a range of intermediate goals for 2011 that pointed towards a vision for 2021, stating that 'a major part of the population is eating according to the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations'.

The Nordic Plan of Action highlights three main areas of action: enabling children and young people to make healthy choices and protecting them from an environment that encourages unhealthy choices; making healthier choices easier for all; and using targeted action to reach vulnerable and at-risk groups.<sup>24</sup> The idea of establishing a monitoring system was proposed in the Nordic Plan of Action as a means of supporting evidence-based decision-making. The Nordic plan combined with Nordic monitoring allows for benchmarking and peer pressure to be exerted.

sedentary behaviour and the prevalence of overweight and obese people in the Nordic countries. The data facilitates comparability between countries and between intake of different key food groups recommended under the NNR. Social inequality in diet, physical activity and overweight can also be monitored, providing crucial information for the formulation of future policies.

Having a common plan and a means of monitoring creates a foundation for ambitious political actions. But this on its own is not enough; public and political awareness of the goals are also a crucial part of the recipe.

### Reducing inequality in health outcomes

The Nordic Plan of Action has four main goals: 1) to improve the Nordic population's diet; 2) to increase physical activity in adults and children; 3) to significantly reduce the number of people who are overweight or obese; and 4) reduce tolerance for social inequality in health related to diet, physical activity and overweight. The Nordic Monitoring System, in turn, enables highly cost-effective monitoring of the Nordic Plan of Action by providing data on the status of, and trends in the intake of, key foods, physical activity,



#### FURTHER READING:

**Nordic Plan of Action on Health, Food and Physical Activity:**  
[norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:701231/FULLTEXT01.pdf](http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:701231/FULLTEXT01.pdf)

**The Nordic Monitoring System 2011–2014 report:**  
[norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1066553/FULLTEXT01.pdf](http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1066553/FULLTEXT01.pdf)



## *Solution #3*

### KEYHOLE LABEL

**Healthy**  
— **choices**  
**made** —  
— **easy**

# Learn how the Keyhole Label has become a strong and trustworthy brand in the Nordic countries

## Quick facts

Sweden: 1989 to present  
Norway and Denmark: 2009 to present  
Iceland: 2013 to present

## Objective

To stimulate the reformulation and development of healthier products.

## Stakeholders

National food and health authorities in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Iceland. Developed in close dialogue with industry and civil society organisations.

## Key outcomes

The Keyhole is recognised by 94% of Danes,<sup>25</sup> 96% of Norwegians<sup>26</sup> and 98% of Swedes.<sup>27</sup> Studies have also shown that the Keyhole has led to positive dietary changes. For example, a 2015 Danish study shows that the label legitimises a company's work with health and improves their image.<sup>28</sup> In Norway and Denmark up to 4,000 products bear the Keyhole Label, up from approximately 1,000 when the label was launched.

The trend in Sweden has been less positive in recent years.<sup>29</sup>

In 2013 the Lithuanian Ministry of Health signed an agreement to join the Keyhole programme. Since the inception 2014 more than 200 products now carry the logo.



## Solution #3

### Keyhole Label: healthy choices made easy

#### Simple, attractive, trustworthy

The Keyhole Label is a front-of-package labelling scheme that highlights the nutritionally superior choices within a product group. It is a positive labelling scheme that, rather than telling consumers what not to eat, helps them to choose the healthier products. The Keyhole is a simple, attractive, trustworthy label for producers and retailers to use when promoting healthier food products to everyday consumers, and it has been successful in targeting hard-to-reach groups such as middle-aged men.<sup>30</sup> The use of the Keyhole Label by industry is free and voluntary; however, the producer of the product must comply with specific criteria.

The Keyhole can be found on products including bread, grains, dairy products, oils and ready-meals. All fresh fruit, vegetables, fish and lean meat can also be promoted through the Keyhole Label. Products using the label must contain less salt and sugar, less or healthier fats, and more whole grains and dietary fibre than comparable products. The Keyhole system has a set of criteria for 33 product groups. The criteria for the use of the Keyhole Label by industry are set by the Nordic authorities and implemented into law.

#### Putting marketing to good use

The Keyhole has been successful because national food authorities have treated the label as a brand, promoting it with the same tools used in commercial marketing. This, in turn, has increased its recognition and has made it more appealing to the food industry.

The Keyhole is an example of a nutritional labelling system that is only placed on products that meet the dietary criteria, and it includes no

scale or ranking. This labelling system takes a different approach from, for example, the 'traffic light' system in the UK (which uses colours to convey the ranking of nutrients), the graded summary systems in Australia and New Zealand (which uses a 5-point ranking scale) or the international Choices logo, which is based on WHO recommendations for a daily healthy diet.

#### The Finnish Heart Symbol

A similar labelling system to the Keyhole Label is the Heart Symbol, launched by the Finnish Heart Association and the Finnish Diabetes Association and used only in Finland. The symbol sets criteria for nine different product categories, including milk and dairy products, oils and fats, and processed meats. On average, 82% (women 91%, men 70%) of the Finnish population recognises the symbol. Approximately 66% of Finns use it. More than 1,200 products bear the symbol and 123 Finnish companies use it on their products. More than 300 restaurants serve meals that bear the Heart Symbol.<sup>31</sup>



#### FURTHER READING:

##### Keyhole Label:

[livsmedelsverket.se/en/food-and-content/labelling/nyckelhalet](https://livsmedelsverket.se/en/food-and-content/labelling/nyckelhalet)

##### Heart Symbol:

[sydanmerkki.fi/en](https://sydanmerkki.fi/en)

Helping —  
— the food  
industry  
— to cut  
salt —

# Learn how to establish effective partnerships that promote successful product reformulation

## Quick facts

Danish Salt Partnership: 2011 to present  
Norwegian Salt Partnership: 2015 to present  
Finland: initiatives in place since 1979

## Objective

To create effective tools for policy-makers and industry to reformulate processed foodstuffs in categories that contribute significantly to the intake of salt from industrially produced foods.

## Stakeholders

The food industry, the hotel/restaurant/catering industry, trade organisations and associations, research groups, special interest groups and health/food authorities.

## Key outcomes

Between 1979 and 2007, salt intake fell by 36% in Finland<sup>32</sup> and the concentration of salt that elicits a 'high salt' label has gradually decreased. Sweden has also managed to decrease its intake.<sup>33</sup> According to data from Danish Industry, food products in Denmark now contain lower amounts of salt than five years ago.<sup>34</sup> For example, salt levels in industrial bread<sup>35</sup> and canteen meals<sup>36</sup> fell from 1.16g to 1.04g from 2009–2014, and from 0.9g/100g to 0.8g/100g from 2004–2014. Norwegian data will be available at the end of 2018.

## Solution #4

### Salt partnerships and salt labelling: helping the food industry to cut salt

Salt is a significant ingredient: it enhances flavour and is a cost-effective means of preserving many foods. Therefore, reducing the salt content of foods is not an easy task and, as such, partnerships to address salt reduction require trust, patience and transparency in order to achieve long-term success.

The Danish Salt Partnership aims to reduce and monitor salt content in foods produced by industry, in canteens, in cafés, in restaurants and in homes. The overall goal is to reduce daily salt consumption by 3 grams, which is forecast to lead to 400,000 fewer cases of patients with high blood pressure.<sup>37</sup> The Danish Salt Partnership also works strategically to raise awareness amongst the general population and food and health professionals, and participates in EU discussions on the reformulation of the salt content of food products. Through the Danish Salt Partnership, food producers have lowered the salt content of products such as bread and breakfast cereals by setting reduction goals and benchmarks to make existing products healthier.<sup>38</sup>

#### Knowledge exchange, labelling and benchmarking progress

The Norwegian Action Plan on Salt aims to reduce individual's intake of salt by 15% by 2018 and by 30% by 2025. In order to achieve this goal all stakeholders need to be on board, so

#### North Karelia Project, Finland: a success story

During the 1960s, the Finnish province of North Karelia had an extremely high rate of mortality from heart disease, due, in part, to an unhealthy diet. In response to an appeal for assistance, local and national health authorities began a partnership with the WHO to transform the social and physical environment of the province. Salt reduction policies have been implemented through community programmes and raising awareness through media involvement as well as by enforcing salt labelling of foodstuffs. The North Karelia Project lasted from 1972 to 1977 and was successful in reducing the risk factors that experts believe contribute to cardiovascular disease, including the excessive consumption of salt. Forty years on, the population continues to adhere to the changes proposed by the project.<sup>42</sup>

Another outcome of the project was the invention of Pansalt, a mineral salt product containing reduced sodium and added potassium and magnesium. Pansalt has now been patented in more than 20 countries.<sup>43</sup>

the Norwegian Salt Partnership was established to address four key areas: 1) the reduction of salt content in food; 2) the reduction of salt content in food served in, for example, canteens and restaurants; 3) the sharing of knowledge and expertise amongst, for example, consumers, healthcare workers and food providers; and 4) monitoring achievements such as changes in attitude towards salt and the monitoring of salt content in nearly 100 food categories.<sup>39</sup>

In Finland, salt intake has been reduced through a number of mechanisms. Public-private partnerships have successfully helped the food industry to reduce the amount of salt in those food products that contributed most to salt intake.<sup>40</sup> In Finland, salt has been included on warning labels since the 1990s, and the words 'high in salt' must appear on the packaging near the nutritional information if the salt content is higher than, for example, 1.4% in cheese or 2% in sausages (the same is true for the retail of food that is not pre-packed). The national regulations for 'high in salt' labeling and for indicating salt content on certain foodstuffs has been an effective tool for policy-makers and industry to reformulate processed foodstuffs within food categories that contribute significantly to the consumption of salt from industrially produced foods. Salt has also been a part of the Finnish Nutrition commitment system since 2017<sup>41</sup> (see Solution #7).

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*The Nordic governments are taking substantive action to ensure that diets consumed in the North are both healthy for their citizens and the planet. We should all follow their example*

**Jessica Fanzo**

Bloomberg Distinguished  
Associate Professor of Global Food  
& Agricultural Policy and Ethics,  
and Director of the Global Food  
Ethics and Policy Program,  
Johns Hopkins University



**FURTHER READING:**

**Norwegian Salt Partnership:**  
[helsedirektoratet.no/english/  
salt-and-the-salt-partnership](https://helsedirektoratet.no/english/salt-and-the-salt-partnership)

**Danish Salt Partnerships:**  
[foedevarestyrelsen.dk/  
Leksikon/Sider/Saltpartnerskab.aspx](https://foedevarestyrelsen.dk/Leksikon/Sider/Saltpartnerskab.aspx)

# Expanding the market for whole grains



# Learn how to increase whole grain consumption and motivate food industry partners

## Quick facts

Started in 2008

## Objective

To increase the availability of whole grain products and enhance the knowledge of the positive effects of whole grains.

## Stakeholders

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, the Danish Cancer Association, the Danish Heart Association and the Danish Diabetes Association, as well as industry organisations and private companies. There are approximately 30 members.

## Key outcomes

The average intake of whole grains in Denmark is now 63 grams per day, up from 36 grams per day ten years ago. Danes with the lowest whole grain intake have now doubled their intake compared to their previous average.<sup>44</sup> Over 71% of all Danes know the Whole Grain logo and 50% of the people who know it also buy products with the logo.<sup>45</sup> Approximately 800 products carry the logo, up from 150 products in 2009.



## Solution #5

### Whole Grain Partnership: expanding the market for whole grains

The Whole Grain Partnership is a public-private partnership with a range of member organisations and companies.<sup>46</sup> The Partnership promotes public health by encouraging consumers to eat more whole grains. The Whole Grain Partnership is founded on the idea that the more organisations there are working towards its common vision and objectives, the stronger and more effective the results can be. The Partnership was inspired by the Whole Grain Council and the Whole Grain logo used in Canada and the United States.

The Partnership focuses on four areas: 1) establishing easy access to whole grains; 2) ensuring that new products have the Whole Grain Label and are placed in the right product categories; 3) communicating the Whole Grain logo and about the consumption of whole grains in general; and 4) creating events and new norms/standards.

### A logo with significant backing

The Whole Grain Partnership gave rise to the Whole Grain logo, making products recognisable, motivating industry partners to develop new products and making it possible to calculate the number of products sold as whole grain. The logo communicates nutritional advice and a product using the logo must fulfil criteria for other nutrients, such as fats and sugar, corresponding to the Keyhole.

In 2013, specific dietary advice for whole grains was introduced by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration when dietary guidelines were revised. The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration also works to increase whole grain consumption through the Nordic Keyhole (see Solution #3) and the Danish Meal Partnership (see Solution #6).



#### FURTHER READING:

**Danish Whole Grain Partnership:**  
[fuldkorn.dk/english/](http://fuldkorn.dk/english/)

**A full history of the Danish Whole Grain Partnership is available here:**  
[fuldkorn.dk/media/179349/the-evolution-of-the-whole-grain-partnership-in-denmark.pdf](http://fuldkorn.dk/media/179349/the-evolution-of-the-whole-grain-partnership-in-denmark.pdf)

# The next — frontier of — nutrition policy —

# Find out how a focus on meals can improve nutrition and the overall out-of-home dining experience

## Quick facts

Danish Meal Partnership: 2012 to present  
Danish Meal Think Tank: 2015–2016  
Danish Advisory Board for Food, Meals and Health: 2018

## Objective

To address health, well-being and nutrition through meals, rather than just nutrients in foods.

## Stakeholders

Multisectoral partners, including chefs, supermarkets, restaurants and interest organisations.

## Key outcomes

Meal initiatives place more emphasis on public and private food services and on the full social experience of eating, instead of a narrower focus on providing nutrients. Such initiatives often reward or incentivise the improvement of meal experiences by means of awards, showcases and media exposure.

## Solution #6

### Meal initiatives: the next frontier of nutrition policy

An increasing amount of initiatives in the Nordic region now focus on incorporating the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations and national dietary guidelines into daily meals eaten at public institutions. For example, two Danish initiatives focus on meals as a way to highlight health and changes in diet: the Danish Meal Partnership and the Danish Meal Think Tank. They place specific emphasis on how pleasure and the social experience of eating can help create shifts in consumption. Meal initiatives are closely linked to policies concerning food identity (see Chapter 2) and public meals (see Chapter 3).

#### Inviting citizens and gastronomic stakeholders

The Danish Meal Partnership is a public-private partnership that aims to make healthy meals more accessible in workplaces (canteens, schools and childcare institutions), retail stores (ready-meals and meals made at home) and dining establishments (restaurants and fast food outlets). The Partnership focuses on: the supply of and demand for healthier meals; the structure and policies to increase access; and improving the skills of those making the meals. Projects include a market analysis examining how to nudge supermarkets toward selling a greater selection of vegetables and an initiative to improve food education in schools.<sup>47</sup>

The Danish Meal Think Tank was established by the Minister of Food and Environment to provide advice on healthy eating at meal times. The Think Tank had 20 members covering the entire spectrum of the food sector, including chefs, experts and representatives from different interest organisations. The Think Tank produced three recommendations on how Danes should eat: 1) learn to prepare food yourself and teach others how to do it; 2) use fresh

ingredients and purchase food produced in a manner that respects human beings, animals and the planet; 3) enjoy meals in the company of others.<sup>48</sup>

In April 2018, the Danish Government's Advisory Board for Food, Meals and Health delivered ten recommendations aimed at creating new policies and inviting citizens to contribute to the common goal of providing access to good food and healthier lifestyles through meals.<sup>49</sup>

#### A mealtime intervention in action

Under the Danish Meal Partnership, the Danish Hospitality College, five university dormitories, the University of Aalborg and a supermarket chain trained 'student food ambassadors' to help other students to cook simple and healthy meals and to prepare and eat meals together.<sup>50</sup>



#### FURTHER READING:

**Danish Meal Partnership (in Danish only):**  
[maaltidspartnerskabet.dk/  
om-partnerskabet/](http://maaltidspartnerskabet.dk/om-partnerskabet/)

**The Danish Meal Think Tank (in Danish only):**  
[madkulturen.dk/servicemenu/  
nyhed/nyhed/ny-maaltidstaenketank/](http://madkulturen.dk/servicemenu/nyhed/nyhed/ny-maaltidstaenketank/)

**Danish Government's Advisory Board for Food, Meals and Health (in Danish only):**  
[mfvm.dk/fileadmin/user\\_upload/MFVM/  
Nyheder/FVST\\_ABRaport\\_210x297\\_web.pdf](http://mfvm.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/MFVM/Nyheder/FVST_ABRaport_210x297_web.pdf)

# Broadening the range of healthy \_\_\_\_\_ food products \_\_\_\_\_

# Discover how voluntary, multisectoral commitments can help set ambitious goals to reformulate food products and meals

## Quick facts

Norwegian Partnership for a Healthier Diet: 2016 to present  
Finnish Nutrition Commitment: 2017 to present

## Objective

To address the challenges that unhealthy diets pose to society through multisectoral collaboration and to assist consumers to make dietary choices that are in accordance with nutritional recommendations.

## Stakeholders

The agreements/commitments are led by food- and health-related ministries in Norway and Finland. Any company representing the food industry can sign the agreement. In the case of Finland, any food operator can sign, including local authorities and schools.

## Key outcomes

Both commitments oblige signatories to monitor and evaluate their progress. Eighty companies had signed the agreement in Norway by September 2017. By March 2018, approximately 40 applications had been submitted to the Finnish Nutrition Commitment, mainly by the food industry and catering services.

## *Solution #7*

### **Nutrition commitments: broadening the range of healthy food products**

Nutrition commitments are tangible, significant and measurable activities that help to achieve the nutrition recommendations within a defined period of time. To improve the dietary habits of the population, there is a need for a broad range of products with composition, pricing and availability that facilitates the achievement of the nutrition recommendations at population level. Improving the nutritional quality of food products is not enough; nutritional quality must also be considered in marketing, communications and other operating practices. When nutrition commitments are presented publicly, they make visible the operator's level of responsibility, serve as examples and motivate operators to introduce improvements and create new innovations.

Health and Care Services. Those in the food industry who have signed the agreement are also obliged to develop new products and to make it easier for consumers to make healthier choices through innovation, reformulation, portion and pack size. By signing the agreement, they are obliged to contribute to reducing the average intake of salt by 20%, and the average intake of added sugar by at least 12.5% by 2021, and to reducing the average intake of saturated fats to 13% of energy by 2018. The agreement also aims to contribute to the Norwegian national goals for public health policy, including prolonged life expectancy, an increase in the number of years people live with good health and well-being, reduced social health differences and the promotion of a healthy society for all.

#### **Ambitious agenda with accountability mechanisms**

The Norwegian Partnership for a Healthier Diet facilitates cross-sectoral co-operation between business associations, food retailers and food and drink manufacturers, in order to reduce consumption of saturated fat, sugar and salt, and increase the intake of fruit and vegetables, fish and whole grains. The Partnership has produced a letter of intent concerning major sectoral federations, food and beverage manufacturers, the grocery industry and the Ministry of

#### **Voluntary change through political pressure**

The Finnish Nutrition Commitment encourages the food industry to play a role in ensuring that all people in Finland have a diet that is in accordance with the food-based dietary guidelines by 2020. The Commitment is part of the national implementation of Finland's action plan for Agenda 2030, Commitment 2050. This voluntary commitment aims to broaden the range of products supporting the implementation of the



nutrition recommendations. Companies that sign the agreement commit to reducing sugar, saturated fats and salt in food products. They agree that, when they reformulate products the process must lead to overall improvements in product quality, and when they reduce or increase the amount of a specific nutrient, it must not negatively affect the other nutrients and the nutritional quality of the product. Signatories are also obliged to engage in a nutritionally responsible manner (following EU food information regulations) when marketing or communicating about their food products. Targets are set by the companies themselves and must lead to new products and practices.<sup>51</sup> The nutrition commitment contains population-level targets for each content area, and the impact of the nutrition commitments on population-level dietary habits will later be monitored at national level. The coordinators of the Nutrition Commitment are also working with organizations and companies to help them set the targets, specific measures and developing indicators and a suitable timeframe to achieve the targets. A national working group will follow up on the outcomes of the voluntary commitments and evaluate the overall process.



#### **FURTHER READING:**

**Norwegian Partnership for a Healthier Diet (Only in Norwegian):**  
[regjeringen.no/no/tema/helse-og-omsorg/folkehelse/innsikt/avtaler-for-sunne-re-mat-med-naringslivet/id2575961/](https://regjeringen.no/no/tema/helse-og-omsorg/folkehelse/innsikt/avtaler-for-sunne-re-mat-med-naringslivet/id2575961/)

**Finnish Nutrition Commitment:**  
[evira.fi/en/foodstuff/healthy-diet/nutrition-commitment/](https://evira.fi/en/foodstuff/healthy-diet/nutrition-commitment/)

## *Solution #8*

### MONITORING FOOD MARKETING TO CHILDREN

# Halting obesity and overweight

# Learn how to draw up a protocol for monitoring the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and young people

## Quick facts

Published in 2018

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## Objective

To establish a joint Nordic practice for monitoring the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and young people.

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## Stakeholders

The project working group involved representatives from various universities and public health institutions, including the WHO. Input from two industry regulation schemes was also included.

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## Budget

The work was funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

## Solution #8

### Monitoring food marketing to children: halting obesity and overweight

#### Public opinion as a driving force

The populations in the Nordic countries are critical of the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and young people. In order to maintain an environment free of excessive food advertising targeting children, most Nordic countries have voluntary guidelines or schemes that food businesses adhere to. Lately, a joint Nordic monitoring protocol for the marketing to children and young people of foods and beverages high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) has been developed in response to the WHO recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children. The protocol aims to establish a joint procedure for monitoring the marketing of HFSS foods and beverages, which will allow for comparisons between the Nordic countries. The ambition is, therefore, to ensure that governmental bodies and national research institutions in Nordic countries are aware of the protocol. In addition, other stakeholders like food industries and consumer organisations, should be aware of the protocol, in order to avoid discussions around methods instead of results when the protocol is being used.<sup>52</sup>

#### Helping secure regional benchmarking

The protocol describes methods of monitoring the marketing of HFSS foods and beverages to children and young people, allowing for cross-sectional studies and the monitoring of trends. The data provided can also be used for evaluation purposes. For instance, it could provide relevant data for evaluating regulation practices and schemes in the respective countries and enable the study of advertising and marketing practices, contents and forms over time. In addition to acting as a tool for monitoring purposes within each country, the protocol will also facilitate comparisons between the Nordic countries, establishing a joint understanding on how each marketing channel should be monitored, like the Nordic Monitoring System (see Solution #2).



#### FURTHER READING:

##### Monitoring food marketing to children:

[norden.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1183357&dswid=-9782](https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1183357&dswid=-9782)



# Conclusion: Better nutrition is a shared responsibility

While there are differences among the countries in terms of how they address nutrition policy now and will do in the future, the common goal of improving the health of their people has made the case for strong collaboration and innovative cross-sectoral partnerships.

Overall, Nordic nutrition policies reflect a *shared responsibility and co-ordinated effort* in addressing pressing issues in public health and nutrition. These policies focus on *meals over nutrients*, acknowledging that the best way to improve nutrition is through meals and mealtimes and not through single nutrients. Activities and partnerships are *integrated*: the nutritional advice laid out in the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR) is furthered through the Keyhole Label and Heart Symbol, and the NNR is also addressed in the work of the salt partnerships. Many initiatives and policies work to establish *equitable healthy eating patterns* from a young age while also influencing the adoption of healthy eating habits for elderly people. Finally, *standardised data-collection* procedures and a common minimum set of valid, measurable and usable indicators are in place as essential tools in the implementation of national and Nordic strategies for healthy diets. *Monitoring and benchmarking* across the Nordic Region is also an integral part of policy implementation.



# Strengthening Food Culture and Identity

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New Nordic is now the new normal



Gastronomy – the art of choosing, cooking and eating good food – is increasingly recognised for its potential to address major global challenges. The knowledge and values encapsulated within gastronomy can offer multifaceted solutions to combat the unsustainable and unhealthy food that all too often ends up on our plates. A strong policy focus on food identity – the social and cultural side of food – can also reinforce economic and environmental sustainability, and even help target poor food habits like unnecessary food waste. Policy can support these changes in attitudes and behaviours by promoting initiatives and interventions that strengthen the sense of pride in and valorisation of what the national gastronomy has to offer – for example, making seasonal and locally sourced produce more attractive. Gastronomy and the strengthening of food culture also present unique opportunities for local and regional branding, rural development and tourism.

One example that has inspired people locally, regionally and internationally is the New Nordic Food movement. Through the involvement of chefs, policymakers, the food industry, civil society and citizens, bottom-up and top-down approaches have generated a new shared narrative for food, changing our food identity and ultimately our food behaviour.

### **Democratising good food: how it all started**

In 2004, food entrepreneur Claus Meyer and scientist Jan Krag Jacobsen spent six months

drafting a manifesto that would form the ideology of the New Nordic Food movement. The idea was to create **a vehicle to raise awareness** of the Nordic Region through a gastronomic lens. Twelve chefs representing the five Nordic nation states, as well as Åland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, were invited to join and help develop the Manifesto, which ensured a Nordic sense of ownership for the **new ideology**.<sup>53</sup>

The Manifesto – ten **value-based principles** that guided the development of a new approach to food and territory – was discussed by politicians, scientists, farmers, food industry representatives, teachers, researchers, retailers and international chefs at a symposium in Copenhagen. It gained **political momentum** when the

Nordic Council of Ministers lent its support. Nordic governments could see the potential in *promoting regional, national and local food-scapes* under such a simple, yet expertly crafted set of guidelines.<sup>54</sup> While politicians and governmental institutions gave the Manifesto an official 'stamp of approval', chefs were responsible for *'personifying' food identity*, making it delicious, creating a new culinary language and disrupting the traditional Nordic foodscape.

Prior to the development of the Manifesto, the term 'New Nordic' had never been used before: thus, it was left open to interpretation and could not be controlled by any single stakeholder. It was quickly endowed with positive connotations.<sup>55</sup> *Political endorsement* of the concept meant that funding could be made available to *new and innovative initiatives* and that the New Nordic Food movement could be institutionalised. This created a knock-on effect: more food-related projects were set in motion and, in turn, new elements were added to the *storytelling*, a quintessential part of the movement. Innovation in the food sector took on new meaning. Around the same time, Noma with head chef René Redzepi – one of the original signatories of the New Nordic Food Manifesto – became the first ever Nordic restaurant to become number one on the prestigious San Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants list. But this was not just a win for the restaurant; this was a win for the Nordic Region. The timely release of the Nordic Michelin Guide in 2014 was also a sign that the Region had been recognised as a global gastronomic hub. The effect was also felt internationally, and Nordic restaurants opened in major cities around the world. The Nordic Region had the world's attention and food suddenly became the reason to visit it.

### Trickle-down effect: from fine dining to everyday life

While the will to transform and develop a more *robust and sustainable* Nordic food identity was driven by chefs from fine-dining establishments, Nordic consumers, especially those

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*I believe that the way in which we have transformed food culture in the Nordic Region can be of inspiration to many other countries in the world. Such a culinary transformation can be a weapon against both poverty and unhealthiness*

**Claus Meyer**

Food Entrepreneur  
and Philanthropist

in urban areas, also started demanding more from their food. Deliciousness and health were no longer enough – **ethical, seasonal, local, organic and artisanal** considerations also became significant requirements. Microbreweries, artisan cheeses, new forms of cultivation and the **exploration of the deliciousness** of forgotten and previously unconsumed foods were underway. A new **openness to food diversity** ensured that many wild foods, heritage seed varieties and Nordic livestock breeds were brought back into the limelight. Food **alliances** were forged – between big and small players in the industry, and between stakeholders who would otherwise never have connected if food culture had remained stagnant. **Widespread buy-in** and the acknowledgement of the contribution of a new Nordic food culture to economic growth added another level of legitimacy. This had a trickle-down effect, leading to a further **democratisation of the New Nordic Food ideology**. School garden programmes emerged from **public-private partnerships**; a more diverse range of Nordic food products was available in supermarkets; local food markets were revived or established; and food was celebrated throughout the year at festivals and events across the region.

But the momentum didn't stop at the food industry; the New Nordic Food movement was **contagious**. The vision and values encompassed so much more than just food. It was a state-of-mind. From potters to architects to musicians, other creative industries and artisans began to recognise themselves within the vision. Their contributions reinforced the **positive feedback loop**, strengthening Nordic identity as a whole.

## A means to an end: gastronomic policy as a motivational force

It is not obvious why there should be a **concerted policy push** to support work on food culture. Why was New Nordic Food something that politicians wanted to get involved in? One of the underlying motives behind the Manifesto and the **bottom-up movement**, as well as the excitement that surrounded it, was the way in which

it was seen as a powerful vehicle to promote more tangible social goals. A change in food culture had the potential to **transform diets and attitudes**, and such a change could support policy objectives concerning better health and nutrition, better sustainability outcomes and job creation.

Data underscore the **health and sustainability gains** of shifting to a new diet, based on a change in food culture. The research programme OPUS helped translate the recommendations from the Manifesto into a model diet, the New Nordic Diet (which in essence was what the policy was aiming for). By illustrating the health and sustainability benefits of this diet, the research helped validate the **policy priorities**.<sup>56 57</sup>

## Featured Nordic food culture and identity solutions

The policies listed in this chapter touch upon, among other things: developing a common strategy for regional gastronomic branding; strengthening the technical skills of local food producers; developing national strategies for the food-service sector; and investing in the food sector as a part of the creative economy. These soft policies include:

- New Nordic Food: building a regional identity
- National food strategies: capitalising on new Nordic food culture
- Strengthening food culture at the national and local level: reclaiming local food
- Local authority food-culture strategies: branding the experience economy

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## **Around the world, policymakers are finally beginning to under- stand the potential of championing the role of chefs in the national debate on food policy**

**Mitchell Davis**  
Executive Vice President,  
James Beard Foundation



## New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto

The guiding principles of the Manifesto led to the development of New Nordic Cuisine and boosted the production and consumption of products and raw materials that fitted under this broad definition.

The principles were not intended to be hard and fast rules, but rather a source of inspiration for all members of the food community and anyone who was curious about making changes to their food system: 'There might well be ten thousand different ways of implementing the New Nordic Cuisine. The movement and the ideology doesn't say anything about how to cook the food... There is definitely no telling what the food has to look like, whether it's complex or simple on the plate. Also, the Manifesto does not define when something is New Nordic Cuisine and when it is not... That's not what we wanted to do,' noted Claus Meyer, father of the movement, in 2015.<sup>58</sup>

Read about the 10 signatories: [norden.org/newnordicfood](http://norden.org/newnordicfood)



## The Manifesto outlines that New Nordic Cuisine should:

1.

Express the purity, freshness, simplicity and ethics we wish to associate with our Region

6.

Promote animal welfare and a sound production process in our seas, on our farmland and in the wild

2.

Reflect the changes of the seasons in the meals we make

7.

Develop new applications for traditional Nordic food products

3.

Base cooking on ingredients and produce whose characteristics represent Nordic climates, landscapes and waters

8.

Combine the best in Nordic cookery and culinary traditions with inspiration from abroad

4.

Combine the demand for good taste with modern knowledge of health and well-being

9.

Combine self-sufficiency with regional sharing of high-quality products

5.

Promote Nordic products and the variety of Nordic producers, and spread the word about their underlying cultures

10.

Join forces with consumer representatives, other culinary craftspeople, farmers, fishermen and women, food, retail and wholesale industries, researchers, teachers, politicians and government bodies on this project for the benefit and advantage of everyone in the Nordic countries

*Solution #9*

NEW NORDIC FOOD

**Building**

**a**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **regional**

\_\_\_\_\_ **food**

**culture**

\_\_\_\_\_

# Explore how top-down and bottom-up initiatives can help define contemporary food culture and identity

## Quick facts

New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto: 2004  
Århus Declaration on New Nordic Food: 2005  
New Nordic Food Programme: 2007 to present

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## Objective

To develop a new food identity in the Nordic countries and to change eating behaviour.

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## Stakeholders

The New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto was developed by food entrepreneurs and signed by a group of Nordic chefs. It was characterised by an informal, open and democratic process and spurred a regional movement that attracted global interest. The Århus Declaration was signed by the Nordic ministers for fisheries, agriculture, forestry and food. The New Nordic Food Programme was developed and supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

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## Key outcomes

New Nordic Food is now synonymous with quality, seasonality, purity, ethics, health, sustainability and strengthening the bridge between the Nordic Region and the world.

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## Budget

Since 2007, the Nordic Council of Ministers has provided approximately €5.4 million in funding to the New Nordic Food Programme. The money has financed both the Programme and projects that have furthered the New Nordic Food vision.



## *Solution #9*

### **New Nordic Food: building a regional food identity**

The story of Nordic cuisine over the past 15 years is one of transformation. It speaks of a region that was largely unrecognised for its contribution to world gastronomy and that has stunned the world with its ambition and determination to be recognised as a culinary superpower. The 2004 New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto caught the attention of politicians and in 2005 the Århus Declaration marked the official political will and intent to support it. In order to spread the word about the values of New Nordic Food, the Nordic Council of Ministers created the New Nordic Food Programme.

#### **Bottom-up projects inspiring a conscious policy push**

This started off as a three-year programme but grew into a three-phase programme that is still going strong a decade later. During the first phase, top chefs from the Nordic countries were put in charge of managing what was, in effect, a Nordic inter-governmental programme. This resulted in support for more than 30 bottom-up venture projects aiming at product innovations to feed into the new food ideology of the Manifesto. A corps of food ambassadors was also set up and a range of TV shows aired to promote this new culture in the minds of consumers. Many of the bottom-up projects laid the foundations for the developments we see today. The first phase also saw significant support for the conservation of genetic resources through the utilisation of Nordic plant and animal species in the development of products that followed the New Nordic Food ideology.

The second phase aimed at engaging civil servants, deploying specific policy instruments to support uptake among Nordic institutions and consumers, and focusing on the national,

regional and international branding and profiling of Nordic gastronomy. Innovative product development, local food production and creative industries were supported through pilot projects. A street food culture was fostered, bringing Nordic street food to the masses. Emphasis was placed on communications and developing regional networks. The involvement of so many actors on different levels at different times has led to a collective ownership of the New Nordic Food ideology.

During Phase 3, the Nordic Food Policy Lab was created, focusing on innovative, close-to-the-consumer policies that have the potential to shift food demand patterns in order to steer the food system in a more sustainable direction.

#### **Positive ripple effects**

The New Nordic Food Programme's secret to success has been a strong vision combined with a need to change, strong leadership and the willingness to take a risk on funding new and innovative ideas. These actions provided a boost for the gastronomic sector that triggered the movement that would reshape the view of the Region's food culture and its potential to deliver benefits to the public as a whole. A common vision, strong ambassadors and generous risk capital for innovative projects have also contributed to the overall success of the New Nordic Food Programme.

## Spreading the New Nordic Food vision throughout the world

The New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto has inspired other regions around the world to see food as a means of national and regional branding, as well as an opportunity to improve the health of their citizens. After a successful period of food entrepreneurship in Denmark, Claus Meyer, the mastermind behind the New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto, set his sights on Bolivia. Working with a Danish NGO called IBIS, Meyer opened Gustu, a restaurant with a mission to improve people's lives through food. Formally led by Danish head chef Kamilla Seidler, Gustu provides training for unemployed young people and valorises Bolivian food and agriculture by putting the country on the global gastronomic map. On the other side of the world, in India, the Smart Food Manifesto was drawn up in 2018 and will be benchmarked to the New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto.

## Examples of projects funded under the New Nordic Food Programme

Nordic Food Lab was founded by food entrepreneur Claus Meyer and chef René Redzepi to create a deeper understanding of Nordic food diversity. The Lab provides a space where chefs and researchers can conduct extensive research into ingredients and techniques like seaweed, squid, insects and fermentation, and apply them in a gastronomic context. All of the work conducted at the Lab is open source and their research has inspired thousands of chefs in the Nordic Region, and around the world.

Embla Food Award was created to emphasise the quality and diversity of Nordic food and boost the Nordic food and food culture brand at an international level. The award serves as a catalyst for both Nordic and international demand for and awareness of sustainable Nordic food innovations.<sup>59</sup>



### FURTHER READING:

**New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto:**  
[norden.org/en/theme/ny-nordisk-mad/the-new-nordic-food-manifesto](https://norden.org/en/theme/ny-nordisk-mad/the-new-nordic-food-manifesto)

**New Nordic Food Programme:**  
[norden.org/newnordicfood](https://norden.org/newnordicfood)

**New Nordic Food Diplomacy:**  
[nfd.nynordiskmad.org](https://nfd.nynordiskmad.org)

**Capitalising**

— **on new**

**Nordic** —

— **food**

**culture** —

# Learn more about how to create comprehensive national food and gastronomy strategies

## Quick facts

Finland's Food Tourism Strategy: 2015–2020  
 Finland's FOOD 2030 Strategy: 2017–2030  
 Åland Islands' Sustainable Food Strategy: 2017–2030  
 Swedish National Food Strategy: 2017–2030  
 Danish Gastro 2025 Initiative: 2018–2025

## Objective

To use food as a tool for attracting tourism, supporting artisans, improving hospitality, gastronomic branding and sustainable growth.

## Stakeholders

National ministries of food and/or agriculture in collaboration with national tourism boards.

## Key outcomes

Forty-three per cent of the foreign tourists visiting Denmark think that good places to eat is one of the reasons to visit and 26% of foreign tourists travel to Denmark to taste local food.<sup>60</sup> Food tourism in Finland has grown by 7% annually. Seventy per cent of tourists to Finland consider experimenting with Finnish food and culinary products interesting activities.<sup>61</sup> More than one-third of the money spent by foreign visitors in Sweden is related to the consumption of food and beverages in restaurants, cafés and supermarkets.<sup>62</sup>

The aim is to increase these numbers and further integrate culinary experiences as the sole or partial reason to travel.

## Solution #10

### National strategies: capitalising on new Nordic food culture

National food strategies are powerful political tools that can unleash the potential of food. They impact on a variety of sectors, including the creative economy, tourism, hospitality and food. They also play a significant role in connecting these sectors with a common vision. Here, we describe some examples of how different Nordic countries have devised food strategies.

#### Finns setting the standard

Finland was the first Nordic country to produce a comprehensive national food tourism strategy for domestic and foreign tourists designed to make food an integral element and powerful part of Finnish tourism.<sup>63</sup> The government has also developed a new strategy for Finnish food production: FOOD 2030 – The World's Best Food. The objective of the programme is to ensure that: 1) Finnish consumers eat sustainable, ethically and domestically produced, and safe food; and 2) they have the opportunity and ability to make informed choices about their food.<sup>64</sup>

Åland, the autonomous region in an archipelago off the coast of Finland, developed its own strategy for a gastronomy that is both climate-smart and 'future-proofed'. The strategy has five elements, including gastronomy, and Åland is developing a new educational programme for food artisans inspired by Eldrimner in Sweden<sup>65</sup> (see Solution #11).

#### Norway removes obstacles for food tourism

In Norway the experience economy is booming, and with its 2017 strategy the Norwegian

government wants to ensure that food and agriculture also benefits from this. Initiatives include removing unnecessary regulations limiting food and agriculture from the experience economy and a continued effort developing Norwegian food culture to position Norway as a recognised food destination.

#### Sweden backs ambitions with funding

The 2017 Swedish Food Strategy earmarks €5.9 million (over six years) towards gastronomic tourism, partly in close collaboration between Visit Sweden, the national tourism board, and regional governments.<sup>66</sup> The sections of the Swedish Food Strategy that concern culinary experiences and tourism build on what has been learned from 'Matlandet Sverige' ('Sweden – the new culinary nation 2007–2014') to come up with a communications strategy for making Sweden a global gastronomic destination.<sup>67</sup>

#### A new, more ambitious vision in Denmark

In 2018, Denmark launched Gastro2025, a new strategy aimed at securing Denmark's position as a gastronomic hub and tourist destination.<sup>68</sup> Under the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food, The Gastro2025 strategy, as well as the World Food Summit - Better Food for More People, uses gastronomy to push the global sustainable development agenda.<sup>69</sup>



#### FURTHER READING:

**Finland's Food Tourism Strategy:**  
[e-julkaisu.fi/haaga-helia/food\\_tourism\\_strategy\\_2015-2020/#pid=1](https://e-julkaisu.fi/haaga-helia/food_tourism_strategy_2015-2020/#pid=1)

**Finland's FOOD 2030 – The World's Best Food:**  
[mmm.fi/documents/1410837/1923148/lopullinen03032017ruoka2030\\_en.pdf/d7e44e69-7993-4d47-a5ba-58c393bbac28/lopullinen03032017ruoka2030\\_en.pdf.pdf](https://mmm.fi/documents/1410837/1923148/lopullinen03032017ruoka2030_en.pdf/d7e44e69-7993-4d47-a5ba-58c393bbac28/lopullinen03032017ruoka2030_en.pdf.pdf)

**Åland's Sustainable Food Strategy (in Swedish only):**  
[drive.google.com/file/d/0B7O-p6EG9Q3uWMmlxOWx6S093MkU/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7O-p6EG9Q3uWMmlxOWx6S093MkU/view)

**Swedish National Food Strategy:**  
[government.se/498282/contentassets/16ef73aaa6f74faab86ade-5ef239b659/livsmedelsstrategin\\_kortversion\\_eng.pdf](https://government.se/498282/contentassets/16ef73aaa6f74faab86ade-5ef239b659/livsmedelsstrategin_kortversion_eng.pdf)

**"Experiences for every taste" (in Norwegian only):**  
[regjeringen.no/contentassets/95ba7af6a-5894bd69c30f204fe53b549/strategi---oplevingar-for-ein-kvar-smak-2017.pdf](https://regjeringen.no/contentassets/95ba7af6a-5894bd69c30f204fe53b549/strategi---oplevingar-for-ein-kvar-smak-2017.pdf)

**Gastro2025 (in Danish only):**  
[mfvm.dk/nyheder/nyhed/nyhed/mil-joe-og-foedevareministeren-udpeger-gastronomisk-ekspertteam/](https://mfvm.dk/nyheder/nyhed/nyhed/mil-joe-og-foedevareministeren-udpeger-gastronomisk-ekspertteam/)

*Creating a sustainable food culture requires very conscious support for bottom-up initiatives. The combined efforts of chefs and policymakers in promoting the New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto has been a great inspiration for our work in India*

#### Sanjoo Malhotra

Chief Executive Director,  
 India Unlimited and Founder  
 of the Tasting India Symposium

## *Solution #11*

### NATIONAL GASTRONOMIC RESOURCE CENTRES

Demo-  
cratising  
good  
food

## Find out how resource centres build future capacity and knowledge in the food sector

### Quick facts

Madkulturen (Denmark): 2011 to present

Eldrimner (Sweden): 1995 to present

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### Objective

To enhance knowledge about local food culture and develop capacity to produce artisan food.

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### Stakeholders

Eldrimner National Resource Centre for Food Crafts is run by the Swedish government via the County Administrative Board of Jämtland.

Madkulturen is an independent organisation under the Danish Ministry of Food and Environment.<sup>70</sup>

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### Budget

Eldrimner receives €1 million from the Swedish government annually.

Substantial additional funding is provided by the European Union.

Madkulturen receives €2 million from the Danish government annually, which has to be matched by external funding.



## *Solution #11*

### **National gastronomic resource centres: democratising good food**

A couple of national as well as numerous local resource centres have been set up to support producers and enhance awareness of, knowledge of and interaction with food. These centres provide entrepreneurs and small-scale producers with services – from processing facilities to consultations – to assist them in branding and concept development, in addition to courses, seminars and networking opportunities. The centres also conduct significant studies on food culture, behaviour and trends, and interact with small-scale producers, regional authorities, NGOs, research organisations and the private sector, including supermarkets. These unique centres bridge the gaps between research institutions, local businesses and civil society, and local and national food agencies. They build on the New Nordic Food Movement by democratising good food and allowing everyone to take part in the development of a local food culture.

Eldrimner is a Swedish organisation working to revitalise local food culture and stimulate the local economy by providing knowledge, support and inspiration for food producers. The organisation started by creating a production/consumption network where farmers and producers could meet consumers. This extended over time into a network of artisan producers and consumers, as well as outside experts in, for example, cheese or sausage making.<sup>71</sup> Eldrimner supports production/consumption networks by running courses and workshops, providing advice and certifications for cured meat, fish, dairy, bread and berry/vegetable/fruit processing.

### **Improved food culture for all**

Madkulturen is an organisation established by the Danish government to solve societal challenges by developing food culture and promoting 'better food for all'. Madkulturen develops partnerships to create solutions that translate insight and visions into concrete projects and activities. The organisation also works on projects that provide children and young people with confidence in the kitchen; talented people with a means of developing themselves in the food sector; and the public sector with the possibility of developing better food and meal solutions. It also offers consultancy services and advises the Danish government on food-related issues. Once a year, Madkulturen produces a report that evaluates the food habits and behaviours of the Danish population.

Other national gastronomic resource centres include: Food Organisation of Denmark (F.O.O.D), which aims to nurture and feed the interest in Nordic and Danish gastronomy, nature, agriculture and culinary culture; and Matmerk, which focuses on promoting local food in Norway.

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*Giving small-scale artisanal food producers a voice, as well as support and skill-training, is critical. If we don't, few people will have an appreciation of – and access to – diverse, nutritious, delicious and quality food*

## **FoodJam at Roskilde Music Festival**

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Since 2012, Madkulturen has hosted the annual FoodJam at Roskilde Festival, the largest music festival in Northern Europe. For a small fee, festival-goers can access a large, open kitchen filled with fresh and organic ingredients. They are given instruction in how to prepare delicious and healthy food that they can then eat with their friends. In 2017, FoodJam hosted more than 4,000 young people, making it the largest kitchen party in Denmark.<sup>72</sup>

**Bodil Cornell**  
Director, Eldrimner



### **FURTHER READING:**

**Madkulturen (in Danish only):**  
[madkulturen.dk](http://madkulturen.dk)

**Eldrimner (in Swedish only):**  
[eldrimner.com](http://eldrimner.com)

# Supporting the experience economy

## Discover how urban, food-related experiences can boost quality of life, tourism and the economy

### Quick facts

Copenhagen Strategy for Creative Growth: 2016  
Helsinki Food Culture Strategy: 2016–2020

### Objective

To promote food as a significant driver of the urban creative economy.

### Stakeholders

In Copenhagen, the Culture and Leisure and the Finance departments of the City of Copenhagen are involved. In Helsinki, the Mayor's Office coordinates initiatives from the various departments and the Helsinki Tourism Board.

### Key outcomes

The restaurants in Copenhagen have added more than 8000 new jobs over the past ten years making this sector one of the largest job creators in the capital. Similar developments are seen in other Nordic cities.

## *Solution #12*

### **Local food culture strategies: supporting the experience economy**

#### **Opening Copenhagen up to food disruption**

Copenhagen's food sector has grown rapidly over the past decade. From 2010 to 2016, more than 6,000 new food service jobs were created in the Copenhagen region. The New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto and the success of the restaurant Noma (four-time winner of Best Restaurant on the World's 50 Best Restaurants list) had made Copenhagen a centre for new ways of thinking and taste experiences. The trickle-down effect made the Copenhagen food scene vibrant, not just for visitors but for locals too. Food is one of the themes in the Copenhagen Strategy for Creative Growth.<sup>73</sup> The strategy's objectives are: a greater focus on food entrepreneurs and Copenhagen as an internationally recognised food destination; improved high-level hospitality services for visitors; improved conditions for creative entrepreneurs; better networks in the food sector; and closer contacts between the countryside and the city. To do this, the City of Copenhagen supports numerous initiatives and projects such as: the Copenhagen Food Forum, an event bringing the world's top food entrepreneurs and gastronomic hubs together; improving the overall experience at restaurants and making the hospitality sector more attractive; the Copenhagen Cooking and Food Festival, a week-long celebration of food in Copenhagen; and Copenhagen Food Space, a sustainable innovation hub that supports the development of new products and concepts related to food.

#### **Creating a well-rounded urban food experience in Helsinki**

Another city using food to enhance the urban experience is Helsinki. The Helsinki Food Culture Strategy strives to make Helsinki an increasingly delicious city that is a source of pride for its people and a rewarding experience for visitors. The strategy supports the development of outdoor and indoor markets, urban gardening, organic food at day-care centres and schools, composting and environmental responsibility. Helsinki has emerged as a centre of food culture largely due to grassroots efforts that are supported by local government.

#### **Making it happen in your city**

Cities are often the first places to capitalise on food trends. But it requires active involvement from local authorities to nurture new businesses and creativity ideas. As we can see from the cases of Copenhagen and Helsinki, food is not an issue that falls under a single department. This makes setting up a central agency to coordinate initiatives imperative.

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*Cities can drive a change around the world and they are playing their part. There are some great examples of integrated policy-making on food but we need more focus on international policy exchanges to scale up actions*

**Anna Scavuzzo**

Vice-Mayor of Milan  
in charge of Food Policy



**FURTHER READING:**

**City of Copenhagen Strategy for Creative Growth with a Focus on Food, Film, TV and Interactive Media (in Danish only):**

[kk.dk/sites/default/files/edoc/e6e4da56-7358-4440-ae6b-2b09a83e11bb/3af81a-bc-32e1-4f65-8c83-6cecf4c08e59/Attachments/14699349-17314617-1.PDF](https://kk.dk/sites/default/files/edoc/e6e4da56-7358-4440-ae6b-2b09a83e11bb/3af81a-bc-32e1-4f65-8c83-6cecf4c08e59/Attachments/14699349-17314617-1.PDF)

**Helsinki Food Culture Strategy:**

[hel.fi/helsinki/en/culture/city-culture/food/](https://hel.fi/helsinki/en/culture/city-culture/food/)

**Restaurant Day:**

[restaurantday.org/en](https://restaurantday.org/en)

**Copenhagen Cooking:**

[copenhagencooking.com](https://copenhagencooking.com)

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**Social eating:  
from private to  
public spaces**

Imagine the world's largest food carnival and you've got the right picture of Restaurant Day. On Restaurant Day, which has been running four times a year since 2011, anyone in the participating countries can set up their own restaurant, café or bar. It started in Helsinki but the concept has caught the attention of many, from Argentina to Uzbekistan, and 75 countries now take part.<sup>74</sup> So far, there have been 27,000 pop-up restaurants worldwide.

Copenhagen Cooking, an annual festival celebrating food culture in the city, has established an annual tradition where long tables are placed in the streets of Copenhagen. Each table is run by a different restaurant or organisation. Tickets are available to the public, allowing everyone to experience a new kind of food. The Copenhagen 'long table dining' experience is in great demand, not only at the festival but also in restaurants. Customers have become used to dining next to strangers and look forward to meeting new people when they eat out.



## Conclusion: New Nordic is now the new normal

The Nordic experience shows that policies transforming, reinforcing and growing food culture can provide desirable outcomes in terms of tourism, local product development and innovation, the protection of intangible cultural and biological heritage, skills development and sustainable diets.

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*WHO applauds this approach of working with nutrition policy as well as food culture and identity as a means of simultaneously tackling non-communicable diseases and creating a shift towards more sustainable food consumption*

**João Breda**

Head of the World Health Organization Europe Office  
for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases

Strengthening food culture in the Nordic Region has been made possible by simultaneous **top-down and bottom-up approaches** including **opening the political realm** for non-policy makers such as chefs. Healthy, sustainable and delicious food should not just be for the elite: the **democratisation of good food** is a core value shared by all stakeholders and a tool for social gains. Success is also derived from **multiple, mutually reinforcing approaches** such as taste training for children, skills development in the food sector, interactive events, **strong media campaigns** and increased access to and **awareness** of the food system.

Without a doubt, the New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto **triggered a domino effect**, not only in the Nordic Region but around the world, in terms of leveraging the potential in working actively with food culture and gastronomy to **create a range of public benefits**, for the local economy and livelihoods to an increased awareness of seasonality and sustainable diets. The Nordic countries have moved from being the little brother of the culinary world to being taken seriously as a gastronomic epicentre, gaining prominence on the world stage. The Region is now a well-known destination for gourmet food lovers, where visitors from all over the world come to taste unique seasonal flavours.

This in turn increases the **political awareness** of the **potential of food culture** as an innovative and holistic approach to **increase the sustainability of food consumption**. But the work is far from over; in fact, the success of Nordic policy on food identity and culture is a constantly evolving and expanding project. The development is fuelled by the question: **How do we continue to move forward, reinventing – and rediscovering – ourselves and our food culture?**



# Public Food and Meals

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Putting meals front and centre

Public meals are meals served in the public sector, including in care homes, prisons, hospitals, schools, recreational centres, and local and national government offices. As vehicles for change, public food and meals have attracted increasing attention over recent years. Given that the Nordic countries have rather large public sectors, the potential impact of public meals programmes is significant. Investing to improve public meals, also referred to as public catering, is a part of the preventative public health puzzle that can nudge people from all backgrounds and in all ages towards better food behaviour, improved dietary choices, social interaction around food and healthy relationships with food, as can also help bring about nutritional equality.

Mealtimes are direct, yet non-invasive, political interventions; they are moments when multiple goals – like nutrition, organic/local food, food behaviour/identity and the reduction of food waste – can be addressed simultaneously. In addition to providing meals, public catering services support local food production, create jobs, support food security and help further the UN Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>75</sup>

### Better meals for more people

The first examples of public meals in the Nordic countries took the form of *school lunch programmes* and were some of the first policies of the kind in the world;<sup>76</sup> examples of school meals have been documented since the 1800s.<sup>77 78</sup> For example, Norway's 'Oslo Breakfast' model, a free school meal consisting of

milk, bread and butter, cheese and fruit, was copied by in many other countries including Canada and Australia. In 1948, Finland established a national programme to provide school meals. The meals consisted only of soups, gruel or thin porridges and nutritional composition was not taken into consideration until later.<sup>79</sup> Similar to many other high-income countries, mealtimes were also integrated into *teaching curricula*, such as home economics and, later, as a part of holistic pedagogical models including school gardens and farm visits. While Sweden and Finland have national taxpayer-funded school meal programmes, Denmark, Norway and Iceland do not. Progressive local authority school lunch programmes, as well as subsidised fruit and milk, are often implemented where universal programmes are not provided. In Iceland, school meals should be in accordance with official nutrition recommendations and the meals are often subsidized by the municipalities.

In more recent times, *meals have gained new significance*. A greater number of meals are now eaten outside the home than ever before. Approximately 5.5 million meals are served in the public sector every day by 55,000 kitchens in Sweden, Denmark and Finland and the net sum of annual procurement in Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway is €2.3 billion.<sup>80</sup>

Labels such as the Heart Symbol in Finland and the Danish Meal Label are also used to help canteen staff produce nutritious meals. Another common feature in the Nordic countries is the *affordability* of these meals and the nutritional equality that they can provide. Giving school children a free, nutritious meal, or ensuring diversity in the daily food in canteens, is seen as a relatively easy way to address health inequalities created by differences in socio-economic backgrounds.

## Holistic meal models

What ends up on the plate during mealtimes in public institutions is also dictated by guidelines. Specific guidelines are issued to schools, care homes, recreational centres and hospitals. The *Nordic Nutrition Recommendations*, along with *national dietary guidelines*, form the basis of these guidelines for public institutions.

From a Nordic meal-policy perspective, what is put on the plate is not enough. There is a growing acknowledgement that the *food environment*, and in particular the quality of what is on offer, will play a huge role if society is to reap the potential benefits of public meals. Mealtimes can be used to *promote better nutrition* and *address sustainability concerns*, as well as to promote appreciation of food. Interaction and behaviour around food are also important for healthy eating habits and ensuring that the food is eaten. For example, Nordic school children and their teachers eating together underlines the *Nordic egalitarian approach*. In addition to this, mealtimes are increasingly used as an interactive form of teaching. 'Food citizenship' is recognised in Finland as a means of encouraging *public participation* in food production and consumption-related activities at

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*In Copenhagen, public meals are now made from fresh produce. We waste less food and the kitchen staff are prouder and happier with their work. These are the positive side effects of going 90% organic*

**Kenneth Højbjerg**

Director, Copenhagen  
House of Food

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**School meal programmes – like those found in Brazil, Finland and Sweden – catalyse educational and economic impacts thanks to multi-sectoral approaches and linkages to local agriculture. They are free, universal and cover each student's basic nutritional needs, with impacts on long-term development**

**Daniel Balaban**  
Director and Representative, World Food  
Programme Centre of Excellence Against Hunger

the community level by, for example, growing vegetables in community gardens or getting involved with local public kitchens.<sup>81</sup>

## Building the capacity of change-makers

Like the driving forces behind food identity policy (see Chapter 2), meal-related policies **emphasise ongoing training for food professionals**. The development of new policies and requirements has not been a difficult undertaking; rather, meals present new opportunities for **tackling poor nutrition** and enhances the capacity of kitchen staff to produce great meals. Investing in capacity building has, in many cases, also been part of a long-term economic strategy. Evidence from the City of Copenhagen organic conversion of public-sector canteens shows that money can be saved by training staff in how to produce meals **using fresh, raw ingredients** and by buying in bulk rather than purchasing processed ingredients that require little skill to prepare.<sup>82</sup> The same can be said of the **reduction of food waste**. For example, a 2014 report shows that food waste could be significantly reduced by aligning food procurement for public-sector kitchens with the Danish Organic Action Plan 2020.<sup>83</sup>

## Featured public food and meal solutions

This chapter demonstrates the power of meals to achieve multiple goals, including improving nutrition, teaching better food behaviour and increasing the proportion of local and organic food bought and served. The specific policy solutions that will be highlighted are:

- Universal school meal programmes: establishing nutritional equality
- Public procurement of organic food: implementing the 'Copenhagen model'
- Organic strategies for public meals: setting ambitious goals
- Public meal models: delivering on multiple societal goals
- The Danish Meal Label: making meals eaten outside the home nutritious and delicious
- Hospital meals: improving the patient experience

## *Solution #13*

### UNIVERSAL SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMMES

**Establish-  
\_\_\_\_\_ ing  
nutri- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ tional  
equality \_\_\_\_\_**

## Learn more about two of the world's longest running school meal programmes

### Quick facts

Included in the Swedish Education Act: 1997

Included in Finnish Law: 1948

### Objective

To provide all students with the opportunity to develop healthy eating habits and ensure more equitable health outcomes, as well as improved and more equitable learning results.

### Stakeholders

School meal guidelines are developed by the national agencies for education, national nutrition councils and expert working groups. Local authorities and other education providers are responsible for the practicalities.

### Key outcomes

In Sweden, 260 million school meals are served annually. In Finland, nearly 900,000 pupils and students are entitled to a free school lunch each day.

### Budget

Healthy school meals need not be expensive. In Sweden, school meals cost about €587 per student per year and the cost includes food, personnel and transportation. The costs are covered by local taxes. The cost of ingredients in an average meal is €1.00.<sup>84</sup> In Finland, the average meal costs €2.80 per student per day, including food as well as transportation and personnel.<sup>85</sup>



## Solution #13

### Universal school meal programmes: establishing nutritional equality

School meals provide one-third of a student's total daily energy requirement, on average. School meals are the highlight of the school day, and support learning, satisfaction, food competencies and food 'sense'.

In Sweden, children attending primary school (6–15 years of age) are entitled to free school meal. In Finland, free school meals are provided to students attending pre-primary to upper-secondary school (6–16 years of age).<sup>86</sup>

In 2011, the Swedish Education Act was updated so that in addition to being free, the school meals must now also comply with the Swedish Dietary Guidelines<sup>87</sup> and the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations. In Finland, school meals are based on the Finnish dietary guidelines and can bear the Heart Symbol (see Solution #3) if they comply with the guidelines. School meals are also recognised as an important aspect of promoting equality in terms of health. In 2017, the Finnish School Meal Recommendations included environmental sustainability, and a wide range of local seasonal vegetables, local grains, root vegetables and legumes, limits on the consumption of red meat, as well as consumption of fish from lakes.<sup>88</sup> The recommendations also stipulate that food waste must be monitored and publicised in the school.

SkolmatSverige ('School Food Sweden') supports the Swedish school meal system by providing a free online tool that assesses the nutritional value of the proposed school menu. The tool also allows schools to document other areas related to meal quality, such as safe food, the dining environment and educational aspects. Currently 41% of all primary schools in the country use the tool.<sup>90</sup> Those schools that use the tool have been found to improve the nutritional quality and lower the environmental impact of the meals they serve.<sup>91</sup>

In both Sweden and Finland, school meals are an important part of the educational curricula and meals are seen as holistic pedagogical tools. Many schools arrange excursions to farms and food companies. Students are invited to take part in the preparation of the food. Establishing a positive meal environment makes eating appealing and encourages healthy choices now and in the future.

### School food 2.0

The Finnish School Meal Network, a coalition coordinated by ELO Foundation for Furthering Finnish Food Culture, furthers the evolution of the school meal concept by sharing knowledge, experiences and practices. The Network also helps other countries to learn from the Finnish school meal system and implement their own.<sup>89</sup>



#### FURTHER READING:

**School Food Sweden:**  
[skolmatsverige.se/in-english](http://skolmatsverige.se/in-english)

**Finnish School meals:**  
[elo-saatio.fi/finnish-free-school-meals](http://elo-saatio.fi/finnish-free-school-meals)

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*The effect of school meals  
– when made nutritious,  
attractive and sustainable –  
follows the students throughout  
their lives as food memories and  
experiences in learning to eat,  
widening of taste preferences  
and a model of sustainable  
eating habits*

**Marjaana Manninen**

Counsellor of Education,  
Finnish National Agency for Education

## Children's Food House

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Teaching children to cook healthy and delicious meals can influence lifelong food habits. At the Children's Food House, an initiative under the Copenhagen House of Food (an independent public institution), children are taught about seasonal local ingredients; how to navigate the kitchen; how to taste and identify high quality foods; and how to prepare homemade meals. Classes are available for schools, day care institutions and after-school institutions.<sup>92</sup>

## *Solution #14*

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT OF ORGANIC FOOD

Implement  
\_\_\_\_\_ ing the  
'Copen \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ hagen  
model' \_\_\_\_\_

# Discover how Copenhagen became a world leader in serving organic food in public-sector canteens

## Quick facts

Copenhagen, Denmark (population: 613,000): 90% organic by 2015, goal set in 2007

## Objective

- To improve meal quality through the use of more seasonal, fresh produce.
- To increase the availability and affordability of organic food in public institutions and support the retail market for organic products through the pull mechanism of public procurement.
- To protect groundwater quality and lower the overall use of pesticides.

## Stakeholders

The City of Copenhagen funds the conversion to public meals using certified organic ingredients, and different contractors have been responsible for its implementation. Copenhagen House of Food started out as an independent, non-commercial foundation established by the City of Copenhagen in 2007 to improve the quality of meals offered by the City of Copenhagen. In 2016, the tender for the conversion was won by Meyers Madhus, a private company.

## Key outcomes

As of the second quarter of 2018, 87% of ingredients purchased by public institutions in the City of Copenhagen are organic. The conversion of all public-sector kitchens to organic in Copenhagen has been so successful in terms of sustainability, meal quality and even staff satisfaction that many other local authorities and institutions in Denmark and other Nordic countries have begun doing so as well.

## Budget

Public-sector kitchen staff are trained in how to stick to the same budget as before converting to organic ingredients. This is done by purchasing seasonal and local ingredients, buying less meat and more vegetables, and preparing food from scratch.<sup>93</sup> Funding has also been made available to smoothen the transition from using conventional ingredients to using certified organic ingredients.

## *Solution #14*

### **Local government procurement of organic food: implementing the 'Copenhagen model'**

In 2006, the City of Copenhagen decided to move from 45% to 90% organic on average in all public kitchens by the end of 2015. Furthermore, this goal was to be achieved within existing budgetary limits. On average an organic meal is 25% more expensive than a conventional meal so, to keep within the budgetary restraints, everything – from menus, work flow and waste to procurement – had to change. The result is more than 75,000 daily healthy and sustainable meals: organic, plant-based, seasonal, homemade and low on meat. Investments have been made in education and training. Kitchen staff have become proud professionals, and kitchens have even experienced fewer sick days and a better working environment as the nature of the work has changed from opening packages of processed food to preparing fresh produce. Children of all ages participate in the kitchens daily, becoming familiar with a diverse range of produce that lays a foundation of healthy lifestyle choices as they grow older. Over the course of this journey, Copenhagen has not only enhanced quality and improved health but has indirectly reduced greenhouse gas emissions, added fewer pesticides to soil and water, reduced waste and increased the diversity of the produce used.

#### **Conscious procurement – a triple win**

The objective of the programme is not just to introduce organic food, but to use it as a means to enhance the quality, health and sustainability of public-sector food in Copenhagen. The underlying assumption is that investments in capacity-building will lead to better and more cost-efficient services, a healthier population and a better environment.

There are no sanctions built into the programme for kitchens that do not comply. This may sound strange because the results clearly show that nearly every kitchen has increased the amount of organic produce to a level close to 90% or more with only a very few lagging behind. The key is that the programme concentrates on raising the level of craftsmanship in the kitchen by focusing on quality, taste, produce, workflow, menu planning and so on, making it a desirable alternative to the type of kitchens prevalent before the programme was launched. The training and courses supplied by Copenhagen House of Food are available only to kitchens willing to adopt the organic goal.

The success of the City of Copenhagen has had a knock-on effect and many other Nordic local authorities, such as Malmö, Gothenburg and Helsinki, have set their own ambitious targets:

- Malmö, Sweden (population: 341,000): 100% organic by 2020, goal set in 2010
- Helsinki, Finland (population: 630,000): 50% organic in preschools and day-care centres by 2015, goal set in 2011
- Gothenburg, Sweden (population: 572,000): 100% organic meat, goal set in 2014
- Lund, Sweden (population: 119,000): 100% organic food by 2020, goal set in 2015
- Oslo, Norway (population: 672,000): 50% organic food by 2020, goal set in 2016
- Lejre, Denmark (population: 27,000): 75% organic food by 2021, goal set 2017

## The People Behind the Plate photo project

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When the City of Copenhagen reached 75% organic food in public-sector kitchens in 2011, Copenhagen House of Food launched a campaign celebrating the staff who prepare organic meals in public institutions, to support those who had made the project a reality and to keep pushing towards the goal of 90% by the end of 2015. One thousand portraits were taken of 1,000 kitchen staff in institutions around Copenhagen, and the exhibition, *People Behind the Plate*, was toured the city.<sup>94</sup> The portraits showed the human side of the organic conversion project, demonstrating that everyone benefit for ambitious goals and transformation.



### FURTHER READING:

**Copenhagen Organic Conversion:**  
[en.kbhmadhus.dk/organic-conversion/organic-conversion-%E2%80%93-a-plan-for-the-future](https://en.kbhmadhus.dk/organic-conversion/organic-conversion-%E2%80%93-a-plan-for-the-future)

## *Solution #15*

### ORGANIC STRATEGIES FOR PUBLIC-SECTOR MEALS

# Setting

\_\_\_\_\_ ambi-

tious \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ goals

## Learn how national governments are increasing the amount of certified organic food served in public-sector canteens

### Quick facts

Finland's 'More Organic' programme: 2014–2020  
Sweden National Food Strategy: 2017–2030  
Organic Action Plan for Denmark: 2012–2020

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### Objective

To increase the amount of certified organic products that are used in public-sector catering.

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### Stakeholders

Each national government sets the targets for the purchase of certified organic ingredients by public-sector kitchens.

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### Key outcomes

Denmark and Sweden are the second and third largest global consumers of organic food per capita.<sup>95</sup> Organic retail sales in Denmark increased significantly between 2016 and 2017. Organic food now makes up over 13% of all retail food products.<sup>96</sup>



## *Solution #15*

### **Organic strategies for public-sector meals: setting ambitious goals**

#### **Establishing a new standard**

Converting the food consumed in public institutions to certified organic food is a part of ambitious governmental strategies to reduce the environmental impact of food, improve animal welfare and offer new business opportunities. National initiatives to increase the amount of organic products stem, in part, from the success that the City of Copenhagen has had in converting its public-sector kitchens to organic food. Copenhagen, accounting for about 10% of the total Danish population, showed the way and 36 of the 98 Danish local authorities have now taken part in organic conversion projects supported by the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food between 2012 and 2015. The numbers continue to rise, even without government funding.

#### **Accelerating change**

By 2020, the Organic Action Plan for Denmark aims to double the organically cultivated area from the 2007 level. It also aims to increase the consumption of organic products and, to achieve this, the government wants the public sector to lead the way by convert kitchens to organic produce, which would benefit more than 800,000 people. Another part of the strategy is to improve knowledge of organic food and production in primary schools and by teaching agriculture in them.<sup>97</sup>

Sweden and Finland also have ambitious plans. Under the National Food Strategy, the Swedish government aims to reach 60% organic food in public institutions before 2030.<sup>98</sup> In Finland, under its 'More Organic' development programme for the organic produce sector, the government has set a goal of serving at least 20% organic food in public-sector canteens.<sup>99</sup>

Labelling systems can help caterers – public as well as private – to publicise their conversion to organic. One example is the Organic Cuisine Label, a logo recognised by 62% of Danes,<sup>100</sup> which can be awarded to any kitchen that serves organic food, including schools, care homes, hospitals and canteens (the label can be used by all professional kitchens). Gold, silver and bronze labels are awarded to kitchens serving 90–100%, 60–90% and 30–60% organic food, respectively.<sup>101</sup> An online tool is available for the various stakeholders. Since the introduction of the Organic Cuisine Label in 2009, more than 2,500 kitchens – mostly in the public sector, but also an increasing number in the private sector – have been awarded the label by the Danish food authorities.



## FURTHER READING:

**Organic Action Plan for Denmark:**  
[foedevarestyrelsen.dk/english/SiteCollectionDocuments/Kemi%20og%20foedevarekvalitet/Oekologiplan%20Danmark\\_English\\_Print.pdf](https://foedevarestyrelsen.dk/english/SiteCollectionDocuments/Kemi%20og%20foedevarekvalitet/Oekologiplan%20Danmark_English_Print.pdf)

**Swedish National Food Strategy:**  
[government.se/information-material/2017/04/a-national-food-strategy-for-sweden--more-jobs-and-sustainable-growth-throughout-the-country.-short-version-of-government-bill-201617104/](https://government.se/information-material/2017/04/a-national-food-strategy-for-sweden--more-jobs-and-sustainable-growth-throughout-the-country.-short-version-of-government-bill-201617104/)

**Finland 'More Organic' programme:**  
[mmm.fi/documents/1410837/1890227/Luomualan\\_kehittamisohjelmaEN.pdf/1ba-daefc-bc12-4952-a58a-37753f8c24ad](https://mmm.fi/documents/1410837/1890227/Luomualan_kehittamisohjelmaEN.pdf/1ba-daefc-bc12-4952-a58a-37753f8c24ad)

## Nordic Centres promoting organic food in public catering

EkoMatCentrum, a not-for-profit information centre for organic products, provides information, education and counselling about sustainable organic food, mainly to the restaurant and catering sector. EkoMatCentrum has been studying the market for organic food in public-sector catering since 1999. County councils and local authorities using 25% or more organic produce are featured in an annual ranking list run by the organisation.<sup>102</sup>

Every year, the average Finn eats about 165 meals made in professional kitchens. EkoCentria supports these kitchens (both public and private sector) to promote sustainable food chains in Finland. Like EkoMatCentrum in Sweden, EkoCentria provides training and guidance on sustainable choices in professional kitchens. EkoCentria's projects are supported by local and national government.<sup>103</sup>

# Delivering on \_\_\_\_\_ multiple \_\_\_\_\_ societal goals \_\_\_\_\_

# Find out how multisectoral partnerships can improve public meal experiences

## Quick facts

Swedish Meal Model: 2015 to present  
Swedish Meal Days: 2012 to present  
Norwegian Golden Meal Moment: 2015–2017

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## Objective

To address health, well-being and nutrition through meals.

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## Stakeholders

Multisectoral partnerships and collaboration, including schools, hospitals, national food authorities and municipalities.

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## Key outcomes

Many of the meal initiatives in public and private food services have helped raise awareness of the full social experience of eating, instead of a narrower focus on providing nutrition. They often reward or improvements to the meal experience through awards, showcases and media exposure.

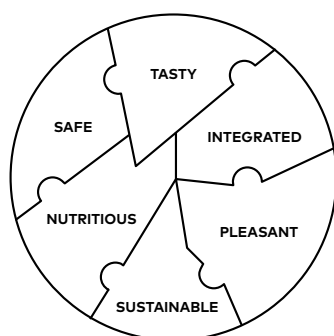
## Solution #16

### Public meal models: delivering on multiple societal goals

There are many ways that meals can be served in public institutions. Models can take the form of actual guidelines, sharing of best practices or highlighting institutions that are doing an exceptional job of creating delicious and healthy meal experiences.

#### Designing holistic meal-experiences

In Sweden a centre was set up to support work on meal experiences in public-sector institutions. The Centre of Competence for Meals in Healthcare, Education and Social Services helped improve know-how among professionals as well as understanding from a policy perspective of the importance of working with meal concepts. It also helped inform the work with the Swedish Meal Model, which consists of six jigsaw pieces to support meal planning and monitoring in healthcare, schools and care institutions: 1) good and healthy food; 2) integrated meals (e.g. using mealtimes as a pedagogical tool in school curricula); 3) enjoyable mealtimes to establish a healthy relationship with eating; 4) nutritious food; 5) sustainable meals; and 6) safe meals.<sup>104</sup> The Swedish Meal Model was drawn up by the National Food Agency.



The Swedish Meal Model  
(Swedish National Food Agency, 2017)

#### Celebrating success

Swedish Meal Day is an annual event that brings together social change-makers from around the country to present their initiatives on making public meals a tangible tool to encourage better eating habits, reduced environmental impact, boost sustainable food production and promote greater health authority.<sup>105</sup> The event was devised by the National Food Agency and is attended by representatives from local, county and regional authorities.

Norwegian Golden Meal Moments was a competition that ran from 2015 to 2017. In 2015, it presented awards to treatment centres and care homes that served healthy and well-presented dishes that patients enjoyed eating and in 2016 it focused on the involvement of patients in the development of menus. In 2017, the competition focused on delivery of meals to people living at home. The overall goal was to reduce poor nutrition and make mealtimes something to look forward to every day.<sup>106</sup> The Norwegian Golden Meal Moments initiative was run by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The competition shed light on the importance of healthy meals and meal experiences for those in care homes, hospitals and treatment facilities, and was featured in numerous national news stories. A documentary has also been made about the competition.



#### FURTHER READING:

**Swedish Meal Model and Swedish Meal Day (in Swedish only):**  
[livsmedelsverket.se](http://livsmedelsverket.se)

**Norwegian Golden Meal Moments:**  
[regjeringen.no](http://regjeringen.no)

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**Cities, now home to half of humanity, are using procurement powers to provide local and organic healthful food, reducing and utilising food waste and increasing urban food production to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase the resiliency of food supply and creating healthier communities**

**Mark Watts**  
Executive Director of C40

*Solution #17*

THE DANISH MEAL LABEL

— Making  
meals —  
nutritious  
— and  
delicious —

# Learn how to develop guidelines to get more vegetables, fruits, whole grain, fish and less sugar and salt on the menu

## Quick facts

2017 to present

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## Objective

To improve the nutrition of meals that are consumed in workplaces, schools and child care facilities.

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## Stakeholders

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration and the National Food institute at the Technical University of Denmark.



## Solution #17

### The Danish Meal Label: making meals nutritious and delicious

In Denmark, like in other countries, more and more meals are being consumed outside of the home. The Danish Meal Label was created to provide guidelines to kitchens at workplaces, schools and child care facilities in serving nutritious and delicious food.<sup>107</sup> The guidelines contain principles that ensure the entire menu and not the single dish. For example, at least one-third of the dishes/meals must be vegetables or fruit. Fish should be available at least once per week and meat with a high fat content (above 10%) must only be used in one out of five meals. Cereal products that are not whole grain should also only be used in a certain amount. Water and low fat milk should be the preferred drinks.

#### Incentivising kitchens

The label is also a part of a wider Danish nutritional policy; it complies with the Danish Dietary Guidelines and integrates the use of the Keyhole Label (see Solution #3) and the Danish Whole Grain Partnership's Whole Grain Label (see Solution #5).

A canteen kitchen can use the Danish Meal Label if it adheres to the principles of the label and reduces the amount of salt in the food. Kitchens are provided with materials such as a checklist to help them monitor and organise the daily meals based to ensure compliance. Food professionals can also sign up for courses to learn more about how to prepare great meals according to the principles.

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*We believe the Nordic region can play a critical role in charting a new course for our global food system – one that delivers nutritious and affordable food for all, while respecting and safeguarding our planet's environmental limits*

**Dr. Gunhild A. Stordalen**  
Founder and Executive Chair, EAT



#### FURTHER READING:

**Danish Meal Label (in Danish only):**  
[altomkost.dk/maaltidsmaerket/](http://altomkost.dk/maaltidsmaerket/)

## *Solution #18*

### HOSPITAL MEALS

# Improving \_\_\_\_\_ the patient \_\_\_\_\_ experience

# Learn how to enhance meal experiences and change the physical/social environment where meals are eaten in hospitals

## Quick facts

2016 to present

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## Objective

To modernise the quality of food served in hospitals and improve the overall hospital food experience.

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## Stakeholders

The Danish Ministry of Health and Danish Regions, the interest organisation for the five regional authorities in Denmark. The joint project has also helped to move food waste up the national agenda in all of the Nordic countries.

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## Key outcomes

As a follow-up to the 2016 Danish Finance Act (the annual budget), the Danish Ministry of Health and Danish Regions agreed that all new hospitals must ensure flexible delivery and the right food and nutrition for patients.

## Solution #18

### Hospital meals: improving the patient experience

Good nutrition is an important part of staying healthy and getting well. Under the 2016 Danish Finance Act, the Ministry of Health and Danish Regions agreed that it is important to ensure varied and good food for the patients in the country's hospitals. The agreement also ensures that meals are beneficial to treatment and meet specific patient needs.<sup>108</sup>

#### More than a meal

In improving hospital meals, emphasis is placed on the physical and social environment where the food is consumed. Patients have their food delivered to them or they can dine together with other patients in a communal area. Open kitchens have been introduced so that patients can see the food being made and enjoy, for example, the smell of fresh baked bread. Freshness and quality are top priorities, and most hospitals have a target of minimum 60% organic ingredients. Attention is paid to employing more clinical nutritionists, dieticians and chefs in hospitals.

Some hospitals also have their own nutrition and food policies. The Aalborg University Hospital ensures that staff also have access to a high quality, healthy meals made from seasonal ingredients. The University Hospital also ensures that its personnel have relevant training in meals, diet and nutrition and their impact on health promotion, treatment and care.<sup>109</sup>

#### The Nordic Kitchen at Herlev Hospital, Denmark

The menu at Herlev Hospital is based on Nordic ingredients. Local produce is used when in season, which means that the dishes offered to the patients change throughout the year. All dishes and the whole menu are developed by two former head chefs of Restaurant Noma. All bread is freshly baked on the premises. Special attention is paid to reducing food waste and purchasing organic products. The hospital serves food to nearly 1,000 patients every day.



#### FURTHER READING:

**Good food in new hospitals**

(in Danish only):

[godtsygehusbyggeri.dk/media/7936/god-mad-paa-de-nye-sygehuse.pdf](https://godtsygehusbyggeri.dk/media/7936/god-mad-paa-de-nye-sygehuse.pdf)



## Conclusion: Putting meals front and centre

Meals in public institutions differ from country to country; there is no one-size-fits-all solution. However, the goal is similar throughout the Nordic Region: provide healthy meals.

Mealtimes have undergone significant change, adapting to the challenges of the present day as part of an *increasingly integrated approach to public food*. As seen from the various solutions presented in this chapter, *meals present an opportunity to change* the way we interact with our food. Ambitious policies can also change the way food is farmed and the way a population eats.

The organic conversion of all public-sector kitchens in Copenhagen may sound impossible or undesirable in other parts of the world. However, the message is that by setting the bar high on a single issue it is possible to *achieve a range of food related societal goals* such as reduced food waste, increased meal quality and higher job satisfaction in public kitchens. These results in turn can *inspire others* later on.

Policies that exert influence on the food served in public institutions have been successful because they aim for *nutritional equality* by providing nutritious food that is *affordable* and *accessible*. Kitchen staff is given opportunities to *update their skills and knowledge* to ensure that guidelines are respected and targets reached. Ambitious goals for healthier and more sustainable consumption have also *helped new markets to develop*, increasing the demand for new products and forms of production.



Man Carrying a Cacao Pod

The Aztecs associated chocolate with Quetzalcoatl, who, according to one legend, was cast away by the other gods for sharing chocolate with humans, and identified its extrication from the pod with the removal of the human heart in sacrifice.

# Cutting Down on Food Waste

- 133 **SOLUTION #19**  
Nordic initiatives:  
Understanding the dynamics of food waste
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National food waste strategies:  
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Seeing an opportunity in every challenge



Food waste is a major global challenge. When food is thrown away, so are the inputs and resources that went into producing it. The environmental impact of this misuse of resources is immense: food that is produced and never eaten accounts for an estimated 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>117</sup> To put this into perspective, if food loss and waste were a country it would be the third largest global emitter of greenhouse gases after China and the United States.<sup>118</sup> The UN SDG target (12.3) of 50% global reduction in food waste at the retail and consumer levels and cutting food loss in production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses, by 2030 – has placed this issue on international and national agendas.

### The state of food waste in the Nordic region

The average Swede throws approximately 19 kg of perfectly edible food in the rubbish bin and pours 26 kg of food and drink down the sink per annum.<sup>110</sup> In Iceland, the figure is an average of approximately 23 kg of food waste per person per annum.<sup>111</sup> In Denmark, the situation is not much better; an estimated 20% of all food that is purchased ends up in the rubbish bin or down the sink.<sup>112</sup> In Norway, food waste across the entire food chain is 69 kg per capita per annum<sup>113</sup> and every eighth bag of groceries purchased per household is thrown away. According to the EU Food Use for Social Innovation by Optimising Waste Prevention Strategies (FUSIONS) project, the average European household wastes approximately 55 kg of edible food per capita per annum.<sup>114</sup> One main challenge is the disparity between how the information is presented: some countries measure total

food waste while others split it into edible and non-edible food waste, making it difficult to make comparisons between countries. The EU also suggests that food waste used for animal feed is not counted as food waste. Calculations indicate that this approach might eliminate as much as 70% of the actual food waste from the statistics in the retail sector, as shown by annual statistics from Norway.<sup>115</sup>

### The Nordic approach to tackling food waste

The Nordic approach to this challenge starts with an acknowledgement that it is complex. Reaching the global target in Agenda 2030 will require *collaboration and partnerships* with all links in the food chain. Government and civil society campaigns have been effective in *making consumers*

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**Food waste represents a huge loss of precious resources. We need to create awareness as well as incentives for behaviour change at all levels**

Karolina Skog  
Swedish Minister  
for the Environment

**aware** of the need to reduce food waste. As a result, retailers and producers want to promote anti-waste strategies that will appeal to consumers. The role of government has not been to legislate but rather to drive the level of ambition, support **bottom-up activities** and minimise regulatory barriers. The Nordic governments have also been dedicated to **collating data** on food waste. Reducing food waste has also been incorporated into many national plans for agriculture, food security and climate change as well as dietary guidelines – signalling an overall recognition that food waste is an unacceptable waste of resources throughout the supply chain.

## From local to global impact

Food waste in the Nordic countries first gained widespread **public and political recognition** during a civil society campaign led by the Stop Wasting Food movement in Denmark in 2008. Between 2012 and 2016, all five Nordic countries joined the FUSIONS project, working towards a more resource-efficient Europe by significantly reducing food waste. In 2013, the Nordic prime ministers supported a three-year effort to combat food waste through the Green Growth Initiative under the Nordic Council of Ministers. The initiative studied and quantified food waste in primary production, developed **new ways of labelling food** to minimise waste and promoted the safe and effective distribution of surplus food. Under national waste reduction strategies, such as Denmark Without Waste II and the Swedish Waste Plan, food waste has been made a top priority. In 2017, the Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries, Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry issued a statement supporting the UN SDG target (12.3) of a global 50% reduction target for food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reducing food loss in production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses by 2030. **Food waste is high on the agenda.**<sup>116</sup>

## Mounting an attack on all fronts

Food waste is a considerable challenge but it also presents a monumental opportunity for the Nordic countries – to progress towards sustainable consumption and production and circular economies. The fight against food waste has **united actors across the food system**. The call to action, the imposition of new constraints and **shifts in attitudes** have created fertile ground for new ideas. In the past five years, the number of companies working to reduce food waste through mobile phone apps, reformulation of products and creative business concepts has grown.

But we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. There is still a long way to go.

We still lack comparable data on food loss and waste. National initiatives have attempted to understand the dynamics of food waste and where the biggest impact can be made. Tackling food waste requires the **deployment of multiple tactics**: powerful communications campaigns; the collation and processing of in-depth data and the monitoring of the amount of food wasted; ambitious national targets; and support for new networks.

## Featured food-waste solutions

This chapter highlights different approaches to reducing food waste at regional and national levels. The specific policy solutions that will be highlighted are:

- Nordic initiatives: understanding the dynamics of food waste
- National food waste strategies: tackling unsustainable consumption patterns
- National food waste networks: encouraging collaboration across the supply chain

# Understand -ing — the dynamics — of food waste —

# Learn how to make a concerted effort to cut food waste throughout the value chain

## Quick facts

2013–2016

## Objective

To understand the dynamics of food loss and waste and to understand where a significant impact can be made.

## Stakeholders

Food agencies from four Nordic countries (Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden) joined forces to tackle this new political topic together.

## Key outcomes

Guidelines for food redistribution and food labelling.  
Better data on food loss in primary production.

## Budget

€1.3 million over three years.

## Solution #19

### Nordic initiatives: understanding the dynamics of food waste

In 2013, the Nordic prime ministers supported efforts to combat food waste through the Green Growth Initiative under the Nordic Council of Ministers. Three sub-projects were launched where there was the most potential to provide the missing evidence that could reduce food waste in primary production and through food redistribution and date labelling. All three addressed a range of stakeholder groups in the supply chain.

#### Identifying entry points

The primary production sub-project looked at six case studies of food losses and waste in primary production in the Nordic Region. The product groups studied were carrots, onions, cereals (wheat and rye), green peas, field peas and fish from fish farms (rainbow trout and char).<sup>119</sup> The project found that there is significant room for innovation to create new markets for edible food loss in primary production.

The date label project addressed the need to change date labelling on food products without jeopardising food safety. The project uncovered huge variations in the estimation of durability of refrigerated products within each product category and for some product groups.<sup>120</sup> Since this project, many companies have taken it upon themselves to make changes.<sup>121</sup> One notable example is Tine, Norway's largest dairy, which added the information 'best before, but not bad after' to their date labels, advising consumers about the freshness of the product.

The food redistribution sub-project provided an overview and evaluation of the extent and potential effects of food redistribution in the Nordic Region. This sub-project also summarised the legal basis for regulation

and control of food redistribution and evaluated the extent to which it has been harmonised or seen as an important barrier to the development of food redistribution.<sup>122</sup>

#### Collaboration = cost-effectiveness

The three sub-project areas reflect the challenges faced by all of the Nordic countries and the approach to tackling them. By working together, the countries do more with less: lower overall costs for higher quality data.

#### Celebrating food waste heroes

The Nordic Council Environment Prize awards 'exemplary efforts to incorporate respect for the environment into business or work or for some other form of extraordinary initiative on behalf of the environment'. In 2013, the Nordic food waste champion, Selina Juul of Stop Wasting Food, was awarded the €47,000 prize.<sup>123</sup> Three years later, in 2016, the prize went to Too Good To Go, an app that helps consumers to identify restaurants and supermarkets discounting surplus food or food that is close to the best-before date.<sup>124</sup>



#### FURTHER READING:

**Nordic Council of Ministers policy brief on food waste:**  
[norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1115667/FULLTEXT01.pdf](https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1115667/FULLTEXT01.pdf)

# Tackling — unsustain- able — con- sumption patterns —

# Find out how to establish long-term national food waste reduction strategies and agreements

## Quick facts

Swedish Food Waste Reduction Project: 2013–2015 and 2017–2019  
 Norwegian Agreement to Reduce Food Waste: 2017–2030  
 Danish funding for Anti-food waste initiatives: 2016–2017

## Objective

To prevent and reduce the amount of food that is wasted throughout the food supply chain.

## Stakeholders

Collaboration between various ministries such as environment, food and agriculture, health and trade.

## Key outcomes

As a result of the Swedish Food Waste Reduction Project that ran from 2013–2015, the government has commissioned a National Plan of Action indicating that all stakeholders should work together to achieve the Agenda 2030 target. The Swedish food waste figures have also started to fall.

A 2018 report by the Danish Environmental Protection Agency showed that canteen staff in both the public and private sectors are willing to work with second-grade produce (produce that does not meet the aesthetic or size requirements) and that training is a very important part of establishing a new understanding of quality and seasonality.<sup>125</sup>



## Solution #20

### National food waste strategies: tackling unsustainable consumption patterns

The strategic reduction of food waste is only possible when the problem has been adequately mapped out and appropriate measures decided on. Each national government has approached the issue of food waste in a different way – sometimes by funding projects and sometimes by entering into agreements with the food industry.

The Swedish Food Waste Reduction Project is a two-part project running over six years. The first phase focused on: analysing opportunities and possible obstacles; an information campaign targeting consumers; closer collaboration between different stakeholders; spreading information about good practices; and promoting the increased use of unavoidable food waste for the production of biogas and utilisation of digestate.<sup>126</sup> In the second phase, the main objective for the agencies concerned is to produce an action plan for long-term food-waste reduction in close partnership with the other stakeholders.

#### Maximising the possibility of success

From 2016-2017, the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food had a €1.3 million funding pool for anti-waste projects. Several NGOs and intersectoral partnerships received grants.<sup>127</sup> Since 2016, 22 projects have been launched covering donations of surplus food, workshops in secondary schools, new business models for marketing second-grade vegetables and raising consumer awareness.

In 2017, five ministries in Norway and the food industry signed the Agreement to Reduce Food Waste, setting the goal of 50% less waste by 2030. The agreement was founded on a shared understanding that the chances of success are

greater if everybody works together throughout the value chain. Food industry partners must commit to monitoring the extent and composition of food waste in the part of the food sector they represent, and report on it every year. The government has committed to developing a monitoring system and compiling national statistics.<sup>128</sup> As of March 2018, there are more than 60 signatories to the agreement.<sup>129</sup>

#### Wastestimator

Finland, like many other countries around the world, lacks national data about food waste in the supply chain. Between 2016 and 2017, the National Resource Institute of Finland created a waste estimation project called the Wastestimator. Avoidable and unavoidable food waste was estimated in 72 establishments, including schools, day-care centres and restaurants. Day-care centres, hospitals and service centres for elderly people were found to generate the most food waste.<sup>130</sup>



#### FURTHER READING:

**Swedish Food Waste Reduction Project:**  
[bit.ly/2LIw2xr](https://bit.ly/2LIw2xr)

**Norwegian Agreement to Reduce Food Waste:**  
[bit.ly/2L6f8aX](https://bit.ly/2L6f8aX)

**Danish funding for Anti-food waste initiatives:**  
[bit.ly/297r2Ac](https://bit.ly/297r2Ac)

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**Youth have a key role in ensuring a sustainable future for all. Food waste is a structural issue – we must ensure that it is tackled across the food chain**

**Mari Hasle Einang**  
Norwegian Youth Delegate  
on Climate 2018

**Collab-  
oration  
throughout  
the supply  
chain**

## Discover how to identify the right stakeholders to establish effective partnerships

### Quick facts

The Liaison Group for the Prevention of Food Waste, Sweden: 2010 to present  
 Matvett, Norway: 2012 to present  
 The 'Less Food Waste' Partnership, Denmark: 2014–2017  
 The National Knowledge Centre for Food Waste, Denmark: 2016 to present

### Objective

To coordinate efforts to tackle food waste across the food supply chain.

### Stakeholders

Consumer organisations, government agencies, research institutions, civil society organisations, NGOs and food industry representatives working together to reduce food waste.

### Key outcomes

Collaboration between civil society, NGOs, research institutions, consumer organisations, the food industry and government has been effective in putting food waste on the agendas of the Nordic governments.

### Budget

The different networks listed below are a testament to the fact that a lot can be done with little. Matvett is now funded partially by companies (60% of the total cost) and partially by the government (40% of the total cost). However, obtaining funding at first was a major challenge.

## Solution #21

### Nordic food waste networks: collaboration throughout the supply chain

#### Creating an exchange across the food chain

Networks and other ways of working together to reduce food waste are found in all of the Nordic countries. They bring together the public sector, researchers, associations and industries to interact with other stakeholders. Overall, the purpose is to share experiences and information in order to reduce the undesirable practices that create food waste and to provide solutions to the challenges that the stakeholders face. Some examples of different national networks working on food waste are described below.

and personal engagement with stakeholders.<sup>132</sup>

The Danish 'Less Food Waste' Partnership aims to increase respect for food as a resource in every part of the value chain. It drew up a catalogue featuring activities and initiatives involving various stakeholders.<sup>133</sup> In 2016, with funding from a private foundation and the Danish Environmental Agency, the National Knowledge Centre for Food Waste, a web platform, was created to help journalists, schools and ordinary people stay informed about how to reduce food waste.<sup>134</sup>

#### Gathering the right stakeholders for partnerships and outreach

The Swedish Liaison Group for Reduced Waste (SaMMA) is an open knowledge-sharing forum run by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Board of Agriculture, and the National Food Agency. The group brings together representatives from industry, retail, NGOs, academia, consultants and policy bodies, as well as social entrepreneurs.<sup>131</sup>

In Norway, Matvett was set up in 2012 as the food industry's contribution to the reduction of food waste and to encourage collaboration between businesses, government agencies and research institutions. Various joint awareness-raising and communication activities have ensued. The project and the issue of food waste have received considerable media attention. Matvett has been successful because of its combined documentation efforts, clear communication, close contact with the government agencies concerned, ambitious goals

#### ForMat Project

The six-year project looked at trends in amounts and composition of edible food waste in Norway, covering the food industry, wholesale, retail and households. Edible food waste declined by 14%<sup>135</sup> between 2010 and 2016. There is good reason to believe that, as well as the food sector, this decline is due to the efforts of the ForMat Project, a major supporter of the project through the implementation of its own food waste reduction measures. As part of the ForMat project, a tool called the ForMat Check helped businesses evaluate their current level of food waste and inspired them to further reduce it.



#### **FURTHER READING:**

**Liaison Group for the Prevention of Food Waste (in Swedish only):**

[livsmedelsverket.se/matvanor-hal-sa--miljo/miljo/ta-hand-om-maten-minska-svinnet/samarbeten-for-minskat-matsvinn](https://livsmedelsverket.se/matvanor-hal-sa--miljo/miljo/ta-hand-om-maten-minska-svinnet/samarbeten-for-minskat-matsvinn)

**Matvett (in Norwegian only):**

[matvett.no](https://matvett.no)

**'Less Food Waste' Partnership**

**(in Danish only):**

[mst.dk/affald-jord/affald/affaldsforebyggelse-strategi-aktiviteter/mindre-madspild/partnerskab/](https://mst.dk/affald-jord/affald/affaldsforebyggelse-strategi-aktiviteter/mindre-madspild/partnerskab/)

**The National Knowledge Centre for Food Waste (in Danish only):**

[madspild.dk](https://madspild.dk)

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*At IKEA, we believe that we have a responsibility to make a strong contribution to cutting food waste. We have started by committing to halving the food waste in our own operations by 2020, but we also want to inspire others to change their behaviour around food waste and loss*

**Michael La Cour**

Managing Director,  
IKEA Food Services



## Conclusion: seeing an opportunity in every challenge

Food waste is high on the political agenda. By addressing food waste, governments can contribute to meeting ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals at national and regional levels. The socio-economic benefits of reducing food waste are also great: for example, Sweden estimates that a 20% reduction before 2020 compared to 2010 would amount to an average of €1.2 billion annually.<sup>136</sup>

Clearly, the issue of food waste cannot be addressed by any one stakeholder alone; instead, *solutions need to be tailored* to meet the needs of each link in the value chain. *Public-private partnerships* have been forged to bring together stakeholders throughout the chain and the Nordic countries already have a good track record. *Collaboration* is at the heart of the regional and national strategies. *Civil society* has continued to play a significant role. *Accountability* holds governments and the private sector to their promises and orchestrates a swifter transition towards a society that is more conscious of waste. *Public awareness* of food waste has also increased considerably in recent years.

Society has shifted and so have food retailers, *making it simpler* to avoid throwing unnecessary food away. It is now easier than ever for supermarkets to sell and consumers to buy food that would otherwise have been wast-



ed, reducing the stigma of food past its best-before date. For example, supermarkets in Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden heavily discount food that is close to its best-before date. All this has been done without overburdening food businesses with new anti-food waste legislation.

And yet, challenges remain. **Better data is needed** so that reliable estimates about the total amount of food wasted and lost can be made. Without detailed data from the whole of the value chain, monitoring and evaluation of food waste on national levels will not be possible. Luckily, short- and medium-term plans place major emphasis on data collection – at national, Nordic and EU levels.

At the end of the day, food waste is about **changing the culture** of overabundance and turning the issue into an opportunity.

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*Nordic countries may become world leaders in the fight against food waste. Not only are consumers aware of food waste, but the value chain is turning food waste into business*

**Selina Juul**

Chairman of the Board and Founder  
of Stop Wasting Food movement  
and Winner of Nordic Council Nature  
and Environment Prize 2013



# Sustainable Diets: What's Next for Nordic Food Policy?

150	<b>SOLUTION #22</b> Dietary guidelines: Holistic approaches to healthy and environmentally sustainable diets
154	<b>SOLUTION #23</b> Climate smart models: Reducing the environmental impact of meals
157	<b>SOLUTION #24</b> Finnish Climate Programme
160	<b>CONCLUSION</b> Looking into the future of food policy

We've entered an age where we need to confront the environmental impact of our diets. Mounting scientific evidence shows that our diets have detrimental effects. The global food system makes a significant contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (emissions, which are estimated to be 20–30% of total global GHG emissions). Food production, consumption and food waste patterns also have major negative environmental impacts, including deforestation, the loss of biodiversity, overfishing, overuse of water and increased pollution.<sup>148</sup> Meat and dairy products contribute to most of these negative global climate and environmental effects.<sup>149</sup>

But while all this tells us that food is one of the greatest threats, it also means that by getting our food policies and food systems right, we stand a better chance of confronting major global issues. In the Nordic Region we are beginning to see incremental steps to *leverage the power of food*. Examples from the Region show that by focusing on diets and meals instead of just nutrition, we can apply a more *holistic lens* through which to view what and how we eat – and in doing so devise more *integrated approaches* that will shift diets in more sustainable and healthy directions.

There are however still some differences between the Nordic countries in how they perceive sustainable food production and consumption. Some place more emphasis on organic food, others on local food and some include grazing animals and national meat

production in their definitions of sustainable agriculture.

### **Sustainable diets = 'win-win' diets**

While it is recognised that sustainable diets are *win-win diets*, with positive outcomes for human and planetary health, they mean different things to different people: different stakeholders may place more weight on some outcomes than others, for example climate mitigation versus biodiversity. Currently, the most agreed upon definition of sustainable diets is: 'those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to a healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems,

culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimising natural and human resources'.<sup>137</sup> In many ways, the lack of a clear definition of what a sustainable diet is has also been reflected in the *hesitant nature of policy initiatives* so far.

Household food consumption in Sweden, for example, constitutes one-third of total household greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>138</sup> As the challenges are significant, the changes and transformation in how we eat will need to be equally significant. Plant-based diets have lower overall environmental impacts than diets based on foods of animal origin and are also generally found to have more positive health outcomes,<sup>139</sup> reducing the risk of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.<sup>140</sup> So, while making a significant contribution to achieving the *Paris Climate Agreement*, sustainable diets are also part of the answer to many of the *human health-centred SDGs*.

## Dietary shifts are already underway

While in some regions of the world, individuals are not consuming enough foods of animal origin to support a healthy diet, the Nordic countries, like other high-income countries, consume too much.<sup>141</sup> But *consumption patterns and attitudes* in the Nordic Region are showing *signs of changing*. According to the Swedish Youth Barometer, food choices have become an important way to express identity, and approximately 30% of Swedish young people eat more plant-based diets because they want to reduce their environmental footprint.<sup>142</sup> In Denmark, 8% of Millennials (18–35 years of age) consider themselves 'flexitarian', choosing not to eat meat at a certain number of mealtimes per week.<sup>143</sup> Approximately 52% of Danes in the same age group want to have more sustainable patterns of food consumption in the future. A 2015 Nordic survey by Ernst & Young found that 24% of Nordic consumers predict that they will eat less meat in the next five years, primarily due to health and environmental reasons, and

34% of Nordic consumers state that they will eat more vegetarian food.<sup>144</sup> Another study found that 20% of Danes consume less meat than they used to.<sup>145</sup>

## Change on the horizon – a snapshot of the changing discourse

Some Nordic governments have started to directly address the issue of sustainable diets. For the past three years, the Danish government has hosted the 'World Food Summit – Better Food for More People', pushing governments, the private sector and civil society to re-think the food system and act together.<sup>146</sup> In 2018, the Swedish government will co-host the 5th EAT Stockholm Food Forum, showing its continued commitment to using the food system to address multiple challenges such as climate change, human health and well-being.<sup>147</sup>

## Featured sustainable diet solutions

It is important to note that the Nordic countries are only just beginning to tackle the challenge of addressing human and planetary health through policies related to sustainable diets. This chapter looks at a few examples of how policies are beginning to move in this direction. It also includes some reflections on what sustainable policy in the Nordic Region might look like in the future. Among the examples of soft policies addressing sustainable diets are:

- Dietary guidelines: holistic approaches to healthy and environmentally sustainable diets
- Climate smart models: reducing the environmental impact of meals
- Finnish Climate Programme: linking sustainable production and consumption.

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# Holistic approaches to healthy and sustain- able diets

# Find out how to develop guidelines that address human and planetary health

## Quick facts

Nordic Nutrition Recommendations 2012: published 2014  
Finnish Nutrition Recommendations: 2014  
Swedish Dietary Guidelines: 2015  
Norwegian Action Plan for a Healthier Diet: 2017–2021

## Objective

To make diets more environmentally sustainable.

## Stakeholders

Various ministries, including ministries of climate and environment, fisheries, agriculture and food, education and research, children and equality, justice and public security, immigration and integration.

## Key outcomes

A 2017 Swedish study shows that those following low-emission diets adhered to a larger number of Nordic Nutrition Recommendations than those with high emissions.<sup>150</sup> The average Danish diet produces approximately 39 kg CO<sub>2</sub>-e per week.<sup>151</sup> However, if an individual was to follow the New Nordic Diet (containing 35% less meat than the average Danish diet) they would produce 44% fewer greenhouse gases (25.8 kg CO<sub>2</sub>-e per week).<sup>152</sup>

## *Solution #22*

### **Dietary guidelines: holistic approaches to healthy and sustainable diets**

Growing awareness of the environmental impacts of diets is now being accounted for within national dietary guidelines and action plans in some of the Nordic countries. These additions represent a shift towards viewing diets and their contribution to both human and planetary health more holistically.

An important starting point was the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR) 2012 (published in 2014), which look at how nutrition impacts society and well-being, going from looking at single nutrients to looking at nutrition and diets as a whole.<sup>153</sup> The NNR 2012 includes a chapter on sustainable food consumption. For the first time this influential advice included a discussion on the links between food, health and environmental protection. Starting off with the question, 'Is it possible to eat a nutritionally adequate diet in a sustainable way?', it included among other things a comparative evaluation of the impact of primary production of food on climate. It calculated low, medium and high carbon emission equivalents per kg of edible weight, concluding that animal-based products are worse from a climate perspective. Summarising, it found that a diet that follows the NNR has less of an environmental impact than the average Nordic diet.

#### **Bringing the evidence back home - from Nordic to national advice**

The 2014 version of the Finnish Nutrition Recommendations encourages higher intakes of vegetables, berries, fruits, whole-grain cereal products and fish and less red meat and meat products in general. By following this diet, the recommendations expect that the environmental impact of Finnish diets could be reduced by 20% over the next decade.<sup>154</sup> A shift towards

plant-based diets has also been mentioned in the Climate Programme for Finnish Agriculture<sup>155</sup> and the Programme to Promote Sustainable Consumption and Production,<sup>156</sup> reflecting that changes to current production systems will be important to making the shift.

In 2015, the Swedish dietary guidelines were updated to consider the growing scientific evidence base regarding the environmental impact of various food groups. Taking an ambitious approach and referring to the overall task of the Swedish National Food Agency, of contributing to the generational goal for the environmental work and environmental quality objectives that the Parliament established, it stated at the outset that, 'What you eat is not just important to your own personal well-being: it's important to the environment as well'.<sup>157</sup> The guidelines acknowledge that plant-based foods have less of an environmental impact than foods of animal origin. Decreasing the consumption of foods of animal origin and increasing the consumption of plant-based foods is recommended to reduce the climate impact of the modern Swedish diet. The guidelines also recommend choosing fibre-rich vegetables and eco-labelled fish, and holding back on sweets, pastries, ice cream and sweet drinks.<sup>158</sup>

The Norwegian National Action Plan for a Healthier Diet aims to bring about a society that promotes the enjoyment of meals, a healthy diet and good health for the whole population. The National Action Plan suggests that a diet consisting of more fruits and vegetables, more fish and less meat, is a more sustainable diet.<sup>159</sup>

Reducing food waste is an important part of reducing the environmental footprint of diets. This is why it has also been included explicitly in the Swedish and Finnish dietary guidelines. The inclusion of food waste in the guidelines is

also a product of co-operation between the Swedish National Food Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Board of Agriculture.<sup>160</sup>



#### **FURTHER READING:**

**Finnish Nutrition Recommendations:**

[evira.fi/elintarvikkeet/terveytta-edistava-ruokavalio/kuluttaja-ja-ammattilaismateriaali/julkaisut](http://evira.fi/elintarvikkeet/terveytta-edistava-ruokavalio/kuluttaja-ja-ammattilaismateriaali/julkaisut)

**Swedish Dietary Guidelines:**

[livsmedelsverket.se/globalassets/rapporter/2015/rapp-hanteringsrapport-engelska-omslag--inlaga--bilagor-eng-version.pdf](http://livsmedelsverket.se/globalassets/rapporter/2015/rapp-hanteringsrapport-engelska-omslag--inlaga--bilagor-eng-version.pdf)

**Norwegian National Action**

**Plan for a Healthier Diet:**

[regjeringen.no/contentassets/fab53cd681b247bfa8c03a3767c75e66/norwegian\\_national\\_action\\_plan\\_for\\_a\\_healthier\\_diet\\_an\\_outline.pdf](http://regjeringen.no/contentassets/fab53cd681b247bfa8c03a3767c75e66/norwegian_national_action_plan_for_a_healthier_diet_an_outline.pdf)

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*Agenda 2030  
guides our work as  
a national agency.  
Food is a key area  
to ensure that we  
achieve the SDGs.  
This motivates us  
to create ambitious  
dietary guidelines  
and interventions  
for more healthy  
and sustainable  
food consumption*

**Annica Sohlström**

General Director,  
Swedish National  
Food Agency Sweden



— **Reducing**  
**the environ-**  
**mental**  
**impact** —  
**of meals**

# Find out how to frame meals in the context of climate, environment and nutrition

## Quick facts

S.M.A.R.T. model, Sweden: first developed in 2001  
Danish climate-smart dietary model: first developed in 2018

## Objective

To promote more environmentally sustainable food choices by individuals.

## Stakeholders

The S.M.A.R.T. model was developed by the former Centre for Public Health under the City of Stockholm. The Danish climate-smart dietary model was devised by the Danish Food and Veterinary Agency.

## Key outcomes

Despite being created nearly 20 years ago, the S.M.A.R.T model is still used by cities in Sweden to this day.

## Solution #23

### Climate smart models: reducing the environmental impact of meals

The S.M.A.R.T model combines Swedish dietary guidelines with national environmental objectives. It was devised in 2001 to bring environmental consciousness into public health recommendations for diets at a city/region level. Since being implemented in Stockholm in 2001, it has also been used in Malmö, which began using the EAT S.M.A.R.T. model in order to integrate climate and food policies and is now also incorporating it into its procurement activities. The model means: a larger proportion of vegetable-based food; fewer empty calories; a higher proportion of organic food; the right choice of meat and vegetables; and cutting down on transport.<sup>161</sup>

The Danish Food and Veterinary Agency has started to advise consumers not only to eat according to the national dietary recommendations but also to eat foods that have less environmental impact. The recommendations include: finding climate-friendly alternatives to favourite foods (especially alternatives to meat); using more seasonal vegetables in all meals; consuming fish from Denmark; planning trips to the supermarket so as not to waste fuel on unnecessary trips; and avoiding the waste of food by eating leftovers.<sup>162</sup>



#### FURTHER READING:

##### S.M.A.R.T model:

[folkhalsoguiden.se/amnesomraden/mat/informationsmaterial/smart](http://folkhalsoguiden.se/amnesomraden/mat/informationsmaterial/smart)

##### Danish climate-smart dietary model:

[altomkost.dk/nyheder/nyhed/nyhed/sund-og-klimarigtig-mad-paa-menuen-i-2018df](http://altomkost.dk/nyheder/nyhed/nyhed/sund-og-klimarigtig-mad-paa-menuen-i-2018df)

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*Our current food system is in urgent need of transformation. Addressing values, norms and the socio-economic structures influencing dietary patterns is crucial if we are to reach the Paris climate goals*

#### Tara Garnett

Founder and Lead,  
Food Climate Research Network,  
University of Oxford

# Linking — sustainable production and — con- sumption

# Discover how comprehensive strategies can address food and climate

## Quick facts

2014-2020

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## Objective

To promote the sustainability of our food system and raise awareness.

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## Stakeholders

Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

## *Solution #24*

### **Finnish Climate Programme: linking sustainable production and consumption**

While all Nordic countries have agricultural strategies in place to comply with the Paris Climate Agreement, the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has gone the extra mile and made the connection between production and consumption.

Food choices should contribute to multiple objectives at the same time, including health, safety and environmental aspects. A quarter of the climate impact of Finnish consumption is generated by food. Greenhouse gas emissions can be influenced by sustainable food choices. It is important to make it as easy as possible for the consumer to choose ingredients and meals with the least possible climate impact. What is crucial to the environmental footprint of eating is the choice of raw materials, while the processing, transport and packaging make less of an impact.

The Climate Programme for Finnish Agriculture serves as an information bank for those promoting a more sustainable and productive food system. The programme brings together the most recent research information on climate issues in food production and consumption, from the perspective of both adaptation and mitigation. The programme will be updated on a regular basis in line with the most recent studies and changing conditions and operating environments.



#### **FURTHER READING:**

**Finnish Climate Programme  
for Finnish Agriculture:**  
[mmm.fi/documents/1410837/1890227/  
Climate\\_programme\\_agriculture\\_  
WEB\\_03072015.pdf/](http://mmm.fi/documents/1410837/1890227/Climate_programme_agriculture_WEB_03072015.pdf/)



## Conclusion: Looking into the future of food policy

With the global food system contributing to 20–30% of total Greenhouse gas emissions, it will be essential to tackle demand for high-impact foods to reduce global warming. Since transforming dietary patterns can also help us tackle the problems of environmental sustainability and lifestyle-related diseases, this is an area where bold policy can lead to many win-wins.

Current trends in the Nordic countries indicate that consumption patterns are slowly moving towards more plant-based diets. Beef and pork consumption show tendencies of plateauing while consumption of chicken is on the rise. As shown above, this is largely a development spearheaded by younger generations, the Millennials' between the ages of 19 and 35. The market is not waiting for the government to step in either: the **food industry is responding quickly** to an increased demand for a larger variety of **plant-based products**.<sup>163</sup> Chefs, restaurateurs and other members of the **food service sector** are creating new dining concepts and capitalising on the growing interest in healthy and sustainable diets.

**Curbing unsustainable consumption of food** will take a **concerted effort** from a broad range of stakeholders and various governmental ministries.

Given the make or break significance of sustainable food systems for the health of a growing population on a small and increasingly warm planet, the shift towards sustainable healthy diets will be a **defining issue for future food policy**.

# 中國 30%





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**When it comes to  
making our food  
systems more  
sustainable, we see  
food as a catalyst  
for climate action**

Katrín Jakobsdóttir  
Prime Minister of Iceland

# Join the conversation

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#nordicsolutions

**Nordic Food Policy Lab** is part of Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges, a joint initiative by the prime ministers of the Nordic countries. We collect and curate Nordic food policy solutions, responding to the UN Agenda 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We invite other to join forces with us and set up global partnerships to showcase and spread the use of innovative, close-to-the-consumer policies promoting sustainable and healthy food choices.



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### **Solutions Menu – A Nordic guide to sustainable food policy**

For the first time, the most innovative food policy solutions in the Nordic Region have been brought together in a single document. The Solutions Menu includes 24 policies that aim to change food consumption and intends to inspire new and robust policy responses to the societal and environmental challenges caused by our current food systems.

The Solutions Menu is produced by the Nordic Food Policy Lab, one of six flagship projects under the Nordic prime ministers' Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges initiative.

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