Food for life: innovation network including the stakeholders in the value chain input to WP11 nutrigenomics and society and WP12 commercialisation

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Research has created new knowledge about the relationship between food, nutrition and health, but there are many myths and wrong impressions among the stakeholders. The consumers are confused and the industries are impatient. The media pictures and research are fragmented, and there is no common arena where the stakeholders can meet, exchange opinions and give feedback. Therefore an arena with stakeholders representing the government, consumer, industry, retail and research institutes (both food science and medicine/nutrition) was established by personal invitations to a carefully selected group of stakeholders aided by a detailed communication map. They were invited to attend three interactive workshops to create a dialogue on the topic Food for life.

Food for life covers a wide research area. The relationship between food science, nutrition and health has been better understood during the last decade, and now the relationships with genomics are in the pipeline. Many new nutrients have been discovered, and their stability through the value chain has been studied. Regulation and labelling of food with health claims are an important issue in this matter, and the consumer right to get accurate information. The aim of the workshops was to identify the stakeholder and authority interest to improve health. The workshops were organised with a mixture of lectures and discussion

groups. A state-of-the-art within the topic Food for life in Norway was given at the first workshop where the main research topics were lactic acid bacteria, antioxidants, fatty acids and complex carbohydrates. The consumer and regulation aspects were also included. The second workshops started with a summary of what has happened since last time, and then the research topic antioxidants and complex carbohydrates were discussed in more detail. Consumer trusts were also part of this discussion. The two first workshops were linked to the interactive dissemination project Flair Flow 4 where the main target groups were SMEs, health professionals and consumer groups. The last workshop focused on what enterprises have to do to fulfil WHO recommendations and a link to technology transfer centre IRC Norway was established. This workshop revealed a huge knowledge gap within food science, technology, nutrition and health among the stakeholders. One of the stakeholders The Food Enterprises Organisation took WHO—warning about obesity seriously and organised a network with 14 food enterprises, 1 ingredients supplier and 1 convenience chain together with Matforsk. They met four times over a year and had dialogue along with the created arena. The network started in October and finished in June 2005. We used the WHO report number 916 on Diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic disease 2003 [1] as a scientific background, and WHO—global strategy on diet, physical activity and health [2] as a tool for the industry to fulfil the recommendations. These were to reduce the content of sugar, fat and salt, and to increase the content of fibre and antioxidants in different food products. The companies learn about the relationship between food, nutrition and health in dialogues with the stakeholders and the thirst for knowledge was enormous. The enterprises launched about 200 new or optimised products, which were in agreement with the goals for the WHO—global strategy

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[2], i.e. commercialisation of the recommendations which are based on research on diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic disease. Due to the great success a new network with ten enterprises has been established in September 2005. As a part of this network there will be organised a meeting in March 2006 where the main goal is: Do the government need the food industries to fulfil the goals in the national strategy within diet, physical activity and health? What kinds of actions can the arena of stakeholder do together to reach these goals?

In addition, we are combining our knowledge within food science along the value chain from farm to consumer health. In close collaboration with leading food industry enterprises we run research projects addressing topics such as knowledge in raw materials, process optimisation, packaging, statistics, measuring techniques, etc. Co-operations with medical research institutes are also established. Transfer of knowledge to the enterprises, in addition to establishment of innovation networks is central in these projects.

These innovation networks can be used as a company model to convert results from nutrigenomic research into products for 75 personalised nutrition, i.e. suitable to operate within the NuGO network. Matforsk can also help in organising interactive workshops with the stakeholders

where the topics for discussion are future scientific and technological development in nutrigenomics, and their social, economic, legal and ethical aspects.

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