

# National Agreement To Improve Product Composition

## **salt, saturated fat, sugar (calories)**

It *can* be made easier and it *should* be made easier for consumers to opt for healthier products<sup>1</sup>. A healthy diet is important for good health. Improving the composition of products and the range of products as a whole, including meals and the range of products in the catering sector, will help make this happen.

The purpose of this Agreement is to reduce the salt<sup>2</sup>, saturated fat and calorie (sugar and (saturated) fat<sup>3</sup>) content in products. This will result in a healthier range of products<sup>4</sup>.

In this Agreement the parties:

- Central Bureau for the Food Trade (CBL)
- Dutch Federation for the Food Industry (FNLI)
- Royal Dutch Hotel and Catering Association (KHN)
- Dutch Catering Association (Veneca)
- Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS)

state how they will set about achieving this together over the next few years, each of them on the basis of their own responsibility.

The scope of the Agreement aims in particular at salt, (saturated) fat and sugar (calories), although it also has the wider ambition of making the range of products as a whole healthier.

## **TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION**

- that healthier food means a lot of health benefits, as demonstrated by the research carried out by the Health Council and National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), among others
- that improving health by devoting attention to a reduction in the consumption of salt, (saturated) fat and sugar is also on the agenda globally (WHO) and in the EU
- that too high a consumption of salt (sodium) and saturated fat increases the risk of illnesses that the average consumption of salt of 8.7 gram per day is well above the Health Council's recommendation of a maximum of 6 gram per day and that at the moment it is scarcely possible to comply with the maximum recommendation for salt of 6 grams per day, even if consumers adopt a diet that is in line with the National Guidelines for Healthy Food Choices drawn up by the Netherlands Nutrition Centre

<sup>1</sup> Wherever products are referred to in this Agreement, this means food.

<sup>2</sup> Wherever salt is referred to in this Agreement, this means sodium.

<sup>3</sup> All types of fat provide the same number of calories. Saturated fat is the least healthy type and consuming a certain amount of unsaturated is essential from a nutritional point of view. For this reason this Agreement uses the term (saturated) fat, including when it refers to energy consumption.

<sup>4</sup> In this Agreement range of products means both product composition, healthier dishes and product range (in shops, canteens or restaurants).

- that the average consumption of saturated fat of 13 energy%<sup>5</sup> is well above the Health Council's recommendation of a maximum of 10 energy% per day
- that almost half the population are overweight and that this is caused in part by their consuming more energy (calories) than they use
- that a reduction in the consumption of calories in the form of sugar and (saturated) fat is possible, although it is not desirable that the reduction in sugar content is compensated by an increase in (saturated) fat content and vice versa
- that an improvement can be achieved through product improvements and/or a change in diet
- that an improvement can also be achieved by changing the normal volumes consumed to the healthier varieties (skimmed, low-calorie, reduced-fat); there is nowadays a large choice available of skimmed, low-fat or diet products
- that a healthy choice is easier for consumers thanks to a combination of widely available healthy products, improved product composition and good information about health choices
- that the aim is to reach the entire population via this Agreement
- that a lot of companies are already improving their products and that in major categories clear improvements can already be seen
- that the monitoring data show that there is often a large distribution between similar products as regards salt and (saturated) fat content and that the highest contents in this range are the first things that need to be reduced
- that improvements to the range of products often have to take place gradually in order to give consumers the chance to get used to (the taste of) the product or to get used to a different food composition on their plate
- that product improvements take time, especially if, in addition to taste, technological and/or food-safety aspects also play a role
- that some companies have a very large number of products in their range or in use that cannot all be improved at the same time for logistics and economic reasons
- that the food market is an international market and that imported products should also be included in product improvements
- that a lot of companies produce for both the domestic and the export market
- that concluding chain-wide agreements, such as CBL, FNLI and other sector organisations have jointly done for several product categories, works well and that this method should therefore be continued and that Veneca is in favour of this
- that the catering sector can improve the healthiness of their product range via both their purchasing policy and their product manufacture; the efforts of KHN and Veneca in raising 'health awareness' among purchasers and food manufacturers can help with this.
- that the efforts described in this Agreement are in keeping with existing initiatives such as the "choices logo" (a healthy-eating symbol) and the Covenant Gezond Gewicht (public-private partnership for healthy bodyweight) and that the parties will coordinate their efforts in order to work efficiently and to avoid any overlap
- that it is important that there be a connection with the top sector Agri&Food
- that transparency about efforts and results is very important and that monitoring of progress is therefore an important part of the approach.

<sup>5</sup> Energy% saturated fat: the percentage of the total energy consumed that is obtained from saturated fats.

## THE SIGNATORY PARTIES AGREE THE FOLLOWING JOINT AMBITIONS

- To reduce the salt content in the range of products so that it is easier for consumers to consume a maximum of 6 grams of salt per day. Consumers who eat good food in accordance with the National Dietary Guidelines can comply with the consumption of a maximum of 6 grams per day by 2020 at the latest.
- To reduce the saturated fat content in the range of products so that it is easier for consumers to consume a maximum of 10 energy% saturated fats per day. To achieve this by 2020.
- To make it easier for consumers to consume less energy. To achieve this by 2020 by, wherever possible, reducing both the energy density of products via a reduction in sugar and/or (saturated) fat and/or reducing portion sizes as well as continuing to promote fruit and vegetables.

In achieving the ambitions:

- The prioritising of the product categories is based on their relevance for public health: their contribution to consumption and improvements that can be (technologically) achieved.
- Products that are intended for children are given high priority.

## STRUCTURE AND METHOD

The organisation diagram is shown in appendix 1.

- The parties conclude chain agreements for product categories with regard to maximum contents of salt, (saturated) fat and sugar and/or calories for a certain period. New agreements are concluded and existing agreements are evaluated and/or validated every year in the Steering Group.
- Retailers, manufacturers and caterers adopt the agreed maximum contents as criteria for their own production or purchasing.
- KHN and Veneca stimulate and encourage their members, via their policy, to make the range of products healthier through healthy purchasing and in the case of freshly prepared products and dishes. KHN focuses on those of its members that have the largest range of consumers.
- The Working group coordinates the practical implementation of the Agreement. Wherever necessary, the Working group sets up work groups that come up with proposals for chain agreements that are presented to the Steering Group. Representatives of the parties participate in the Working group as permanent members, and representatives of the sectors with which agreements are concluded participate as additional members. The Working group coordinates monitoring and communication.
- The proposals for chain agreements are assessed by an independent Scientific Advisory Committee; the Scientific Advisory Committee For Improvements to Product Composition. This committee is set up by the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS).
- The Scientific Advisory Committee assesses the chain-wide agreements as regards their ambitions and relevance and gives its opinion about agreements made previously by the sectors.
- In the Scientific Advisory Committee both nutritional expertise and product-technology know-how and expertise regarding consumer behaviour (including sensory) are represented.

- If a sector does not conclude agreements or concludes these tardily with regard to the ambitions set, the Scientific Advisory Committee will propose maximum contents. These are then submitted to the Steering Group for consultation.
- The Scientific Advisory Committee advises the Steering Group.
- The Steering Group consists of representatives of the signatory parties at management level. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) runs the Steering Group's secretariat and chairs this.
- The Steering Group sets the maximum contents on the basis of the recommendations of the Scientific Advisory Committee and the proposals of the work groups, holds regular discussions about the general progress of the Agreement and keeps the minister informed.
- The progress of the Agreement is discussed each year in an supervisory committee chaired by the minister of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS).

The emphasis is on working on product improvements and making this visible. Most of the work will be carried out by companies and in the work groups and the Working group.

## **THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON PRODUCT IMPROVEMENTS**

- The Scientific Advisory Committee is set up by the minister for Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS). In the committee both nutritional expertise and product-technology know-how and expertise regarding consumer behaviour are represented.
- The committee's secretariat is headed by RIVM.
- The composition of the committee will be published on the joint website.

## **AGREEMENTS FOR SALT REDUCTION**

- Maximum contents are reduced in several stages, where necessary, with a view to ultimately significantly reducing the salt content in the total range of products.
- The salt content of products (about which agreements have been concluded) will not increase.
- Agreements have already been concluded regarding bread, preserved vegetables and meat products, and Gouda cheese. These agreements come within the scope of this Agreement.
- Initial agreements need to be concluded for other sectors, starting with products that make a large contribution to salt consumption.
- It is important that all sectors participate because of the need for consumers to get used to a different taste.

## **AGREEMENTS ON THE REDUCTION OF (SATURATED) FAT AND ENERGY DENSITY**

- Previous agreements such as those regarding meat products come within the scope of this Agreement.
- For other sectors initial agreements need to be made, starting with products that make a large contribution to the consumption of saturated fat and calories.
- Product improvements as far as calories are concerned mean a reduction in added sugar<sup>6</sup> and (saturated) fat from the point of view of too high energy consumption.
- The saturated-fat or calorie content of products (about which agreements have been concluded) will not increase.

- In addition to a reduction in the content of (saturated) fat and sugar in products, sectors which are able to will be encouraged to conclude agreements to reduce the consumption of calories. A plan will be drawn up for this in consultation with RIVM and the Netherlands Nutrition Centre.

<sup>6</sup>This also includes ingredients that contain sugar: mono- and disaccharides, i.e. also honey, cereal syrups (for example malt syrup) and (concentrated) fruit juices that are added for their sweetness.

## MONITORING

The progress of the agreements is monitored as follows:

- Every year the umbrella organisations of the food sectors ask their members about compliance with the maximum contents.
- The progress made in improvements to product composition for salt, saturated fat and calorie content (sugar and/or (saturated) fat) is monitored at product level. RIVM carries out this monitoring and uses the food database (LEDA) as a basis for this. Companies have to make data about their product composition available. These data are essential for a good analysis of salt, (saturated) fat and sugar content in products.
- If there are developments that provide opportunities for improvements and /or a simplification of the monitoring of the progress made at product level, the monitoring can be modified to suit these.
- Analysis data relating to product composition generated by research carried out by the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) are part of the overall picture obtained.
- KHN charts the effect of its policy and efforts using, for example, market or trend studies.

The monitoring carried out at product level is described in further detail in appendix 2.

Monitoring is also carried out at consumption level using the regular Food Consumption Survey (VCP). Salt consumption is determined every 4-5 years using 24-hour urine collection. This monitoring is financed by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS).

## COMMUNICATION

The efforts of the parties concerned, the agreements concluded and the results will be shared publically. To this end the signatories will set up a joint website which will be used to share information:

- what chain agreements have been concluded
- what parties have signed these agreements
- what the results are
- other activities and information.

The signatories will draw up a communication plan.

**THIS AGREEMENT SHALL BE VALID UP TO AND INCLUDING: 31 DECEMBER 2020**

**SIGNED IN AGREEMENT,**

Date: 23 January 2014

Location: The Hague

Chair of CBL, Mr B. Roetert, on behalf of Mr M. Jansen

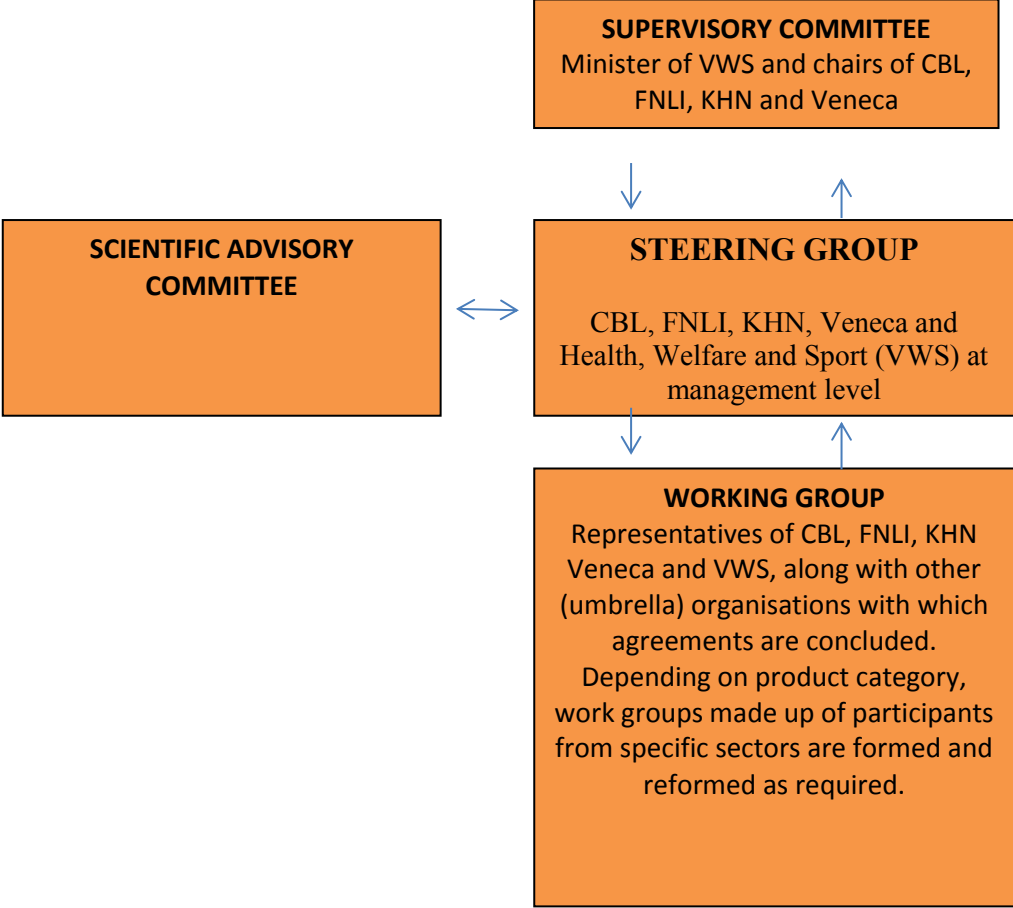
Chair of FNLI, Mr B. van den Berg

General Manager of KHN, Mr L.J.H.M. van der Grinten

Board member of Veneca, Mr T. Verheij

Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), Ms E.I. Schippers

# Appendix 1: Organisation diagram for the Agreement Relating To Improvements In Product Composition



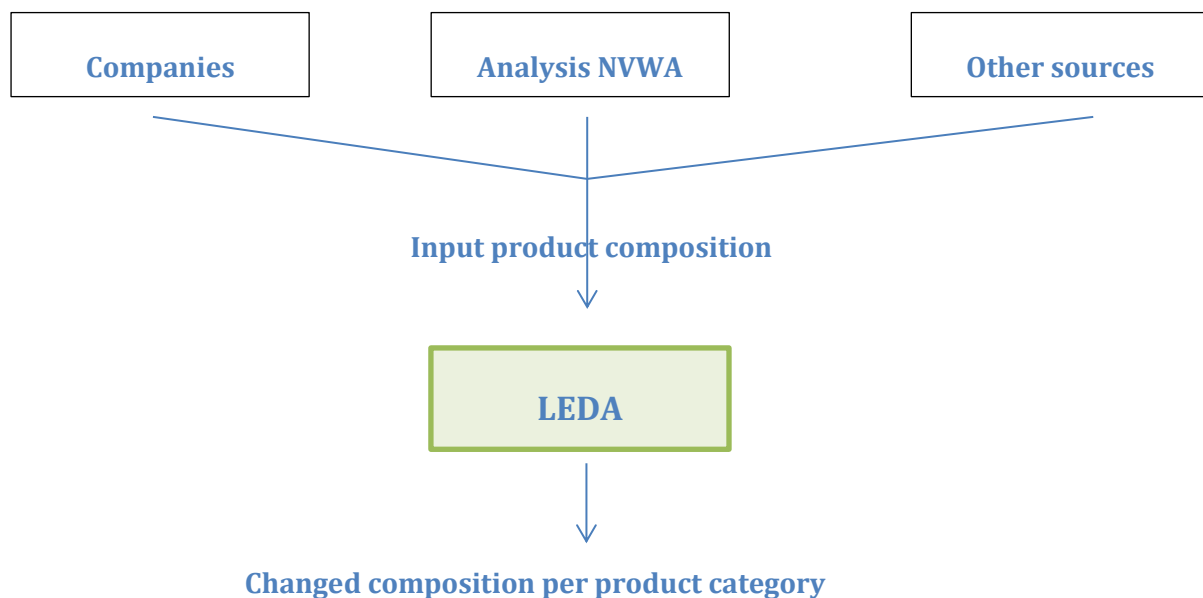
## Appendix 2 Notes on monitoring of product composition

The food database (LEDA) is currently used as the basis for the monitoring of the progress made in product improvements. The LEDA contains the composition of a large number of foods. RIVM and the Netherlands Nutrition Centre jointly manage this database.

The quality of the monitoring is determined by the quality and topicality of the data in the LEDA. The data are taken from various sources, as can be seen in figure 1. Data are usually supplied at individual-product level (brand). These are then processed into average data for each product type. These generic figures are used to compare data from different periods with each other and thus to show changes in product composition.

Analysing all the products every year is impractical. Combining figures from different sources generates as good a picture as possible.

Figure 1: diagrammatic representation of LEDA data compilation



Companies have the most information about product composition and are thus a very important source of information for monitoring at product level. Companies are asked to supply product composition data.

The NVWA regularly measures the composition of certain products. The focus may be on salt content but also on fatty acid composition, calories, etc. The purpose of this measurement is to obtain a picture of what is for sale on the market: what is the distribution of, for example, the salt content between similar products; does the distribution change? The NVWA analysis data are supplied to the LEDA.

Other parties that also have (measurement) data about the composition of products can supply these data to the LEDA. In the past this was done, for example, by the Consumer Association or by sector organisations.

There are currently a lot of developments taking place regarding databases that contain data relating to food. If these offer opportunities for improvements and/or a simplification of the monitoring of the progress made at product level, the monitoring can be modified to suit these.