

# Charter for a healthier food culture

**The Consortium for Tomorrow's Healthier Foods has set out to become leading in the development of a new food culture that engages the general public in Denmark as well as internationally in promoting a healthier life.**

**The overall goal is to initiate a sustainable effort to enhance the health of the general public and contribute to a better life. By conceptualising a new way of thinking health and healthy foods we are creating a platform for developing healthier food concepts and other initiatives to promote a healthier food culture. This approach will ensure continued financial growth in the Danish food sector by providing the basis for a future high-growth industry within healthier foods. In addition the Consortium's work is contributing with new knowledge on consumer-driven innovation within food and health, a field that is given priority in the Danish government's recent globalisation strategy.**

## A global growth market

Chronic, lifestyle-related diseases are a growing problem challenging the entire Western world. In a wide range of areas, Denmark is well positioned to drive forward the development of new types of food solutions that may help combat the epidemic. Denmark holds strong positions within nutrition research, medical science, gastronomy, agricultural and food science, as well as the food, pharmaceutical and food ingredients industries. This is also the case within social science and consumer research in food. On to that must be added that Denmark is a country that has been characterised historically by a

strong social innovation force. There are strong traditions for consumer-driven innovation and for innovation through partnerships, as seen in the co-operative movement within Danish agriculture.

The global market for healthier foods will grow dramatically in the coming years. Through extensive and coordinated efforts, Denmark can achieve a leading position in this market and related industries. This will benefit the Danish economy, but most importantly benefit the many people whose quality of life is compromised by poor nutrition.

### **A committed partnership**

The Consortium for Tomorrow's Healthier Foods was established in 2004 under the Danish Innovation Council. The Consortium includes representatives of the food, pharmaceutical, agricultural and ingredients manufacturing industries; food, nutrition and consumer research; the authorities as well as patient societies.

Among the current members are the Danish Agricultural Council, Arla Foods, the Danish Meat Research Institute, Development Center Aarslev, Centre for Advanced Food Studies (LMC), Novozymes, the MAPP Centre at the Aarhus School of Business, Oxford Health Alliance, Chr. Hansen, the Department of Human Nutrition and the Department of Food Science at the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, the Danish Heart Foundation, the Danish Cancer Society, the Danish Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs, The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, Danish Institute for Food and Veterinary Research, and MeyerFood.

The wide membership reflects the conviction that for innovation to occur, we must break down the traditional boundaries between sectors, inspire new thinking and creative ideas that are truly consumer-oriented. Thanks to the composition of the Consortium, which embraces a wide variety of cross-industrial and cross-disciplinary competencies, knowledge and partnerships, the member organizations and industries possess a decisive advantage for developing a healthier food culture and new innovative food concepts.

During the years to come, the Consortium will work to anchor and spread the vision of a healthier food culture by engaging further in dialogue and partnerships with initiatives and research environments in Denmark as well as internationally including the involvement of additional "ambassadors" and practitioners interested in the development of a healthier food culture such as the retail sector, doctors and health visitors, dietitians and cooks, educationists, teachers, educational institutions, equipment and processing manufacturers, labour unions, user networks etc.

# A sustainable effort to improve the food culture

New product development does not in itself present the answer to the obesity epidemic. Neither can information campaigns alone improve the eating habits of the general public. We are introducing the concept of *the food culture* as an expression of the values, habits, expectations and needs that surround the individual product and the situation in which it is consumed. In this way we are emphasising the need for wide, coordinated efforts revolving around the consumer. The Consortium for Tomorrow's Healthier Foods involves stakeholders from many parts of society and represents many of the key competencies and knowledge of foods, nutrition, health and consumer needs which are necessary in order to realise our ambition. We have launched a range of initiatives as a first step on the path. With this charter we wish to call for a debate about the most important innovation requirements and urge others to participate in the dialogue and partnership to drive the further efforts.

## From vision to reality

In order for the healthier food culture to become a reality there is a need for a paradigm shift regarding development, production, distribution and consumption of food – a new approach that revolves around the consumer and in which the consequences of this consumer-oriented approach are thought through at all stages of the value chain. All parts of society must be engaged in a joint effort at innovation on several levels.

### **Battle with habitual thinking**

*Mindset innovation:* It is necessary to confront the perceptions and mindsets that traditionally influence the food sector and industries. Consumer-driven innovation requires an open attitude to new possibilities among all parties involved. One way to realise the innovation potential is to engage with untraditional alliance partners, creating space for new thinking and creative ideas across old boundaries. Within the Consortium we have initiated innovative concept development efforts involving the patient societies, nutrition and social scientists and food producers in the development of specific healthier food concepts and – products aimed at families with young children. In the coming year the Consortium will continue to involve new partners in the efforts to redefine the approach to health in the food sector.

### **New foods and innovative food concepts**

*Product innovation:* Food producers must intensify the development of new products that are not only based on the latest research in food nutrition, technology and quality, but also incorporate new knowledge of the significance for the actual and perceived quality of the products in terms of taste and meal composition, emotional packaging and brand value, and moreover the communication to the consumer. Supported by a grant from the Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation, the Consortium is carrying out the research project “Breaking Down Barriers for Healthier Eating” in 2006-2008. The project is intended to generate new knowledge of the factors that prevent or facilitate purchase and consumption of healthier foods and to utilize this knowledge in the development of concrete new product concepts. Further, the Consortium will in the future work to identify and develop new potential healthier food concepts, including convenience concepts for families.

### **Wider availability and accessibility**

*Market innovation:* New approaches are required in conceptualising, marketing and distributing healthier foods. The healthy products must be at least as attractive to the consumer as less healthy foods, and be just as available and accessible in terms of distribution and price. To make a significant impact in reaching the consumer with the healthier message and product, it is necessary to develop new partnerships with the retail sector and to cultivate alternative distribution channels. The Consortium has been a catalyst for the development of a new concept for distributing healthy meals to employees via workplace canteens, which will be tested in a pilot project in 2007. Furthermore over the coming year the Consortium will work to identify and establish new partnerships with the retail sector on marketing and distributing healthier foods.

### **Increased demand for healthier foods**

*Consumer innovation:* There is a need for initiatives that directly involve consumers in developing healthier nutrition and eating patterns. Consumers need knowledge and training in order to provide a sophisticated demand for healthier foods of high quality. Future consumers must have a better understanding of food, the origins of food and nutrition and consumption as part of a healthy meal. During the coming year the Consortium will develop and test new concepts aiming to build lasting improvements in consumer behaviour.