

Press Release – July 2017

For immediate release

New whole-grain food definition paves the way towards clearer labelling on food packaging

Today, a new definition of *whole-grain foods*, developed by the Healthgrain Forum – a Europe-based partnership between cereal scientists from academia and industry – has been published in 'Advances in Nutrition'.¹ Whole grains are widely recognised as an important part of a healthy diet, but most people do not eat enough and clear labelling is required to help consumers choose whole grain foods.

The new Healthgrain Forum definition recommends that a food may be labelled as '*whole grain*' if it contains at least 30 % whole-grain ingredients in the overall product. In addition, the food must comply with other compositional criteria, namely that the whole grain content must exceed the refined grain ingredients, on a dry weight basis and must not contain high levels of salt, sugar and fat as stipulated in national healthy nutritional guidelines.

The new definition provides greater clarity and standardises when a food can be labelled whole grain – e.g. 'whole-grain bread' or 'whole-grain pasta', making it easier for consumers to identify *whole-grain foods*.

This builds on the widely recognised '[whole grain definition](#)' for whole grain as a raw material and ingredient proposed by the Healthgrain Forum in 2014. When formulating the new *whole-grain food* definition, the Healthgrain Forum considered a wide range of existing *whole-grain food* definitions, and drew on the findings of major observational studies which inform many current dietary guidelines.

This move marks a turning point for whole grains, as previously proposed *whole-grain food* definitions failed to account for the diversity of whole-grain products on the market. Moreover, former definitions did not make any requirement for whole-grain foods to meet any healthy eating criteria. The new *whole-grain food* definition includes this to ensure that consumers know that they are making a healthier choice when choosing a *whole-grain food*.

'This has taken our group over two years of many meetings and consultations among academic and industry members to come up with a definition that is both grounded in the available science and provides an incentive for food manufacturers to increase whole grains in a wide range of products. And can be realistic across a wide range of food cultures.' said Alastair Ross, who coordinated the group of experts developing the definition.

Food labels play an integral role in consumer choice; clear labels that inspire trust are essential in supporting consumers to select healthier products. This new *whole-grain food* definition gives consumers the necessary assurance that foods labelled 'whole grain' do indeed contain a substantial amount of whole grains.

The authors hope that the new *whole-grain food* definition will encourage food manufacturers to develop novel, healthy and tasty whole-grain products especially targeting people who don't

¹ The new paper on the wholegrain food definition is available for free download:
<http://advances.nutrition.org/content/8/4/525.abstract>



normally consume whole grains. 'This is just a starting point and the aim of the definition is to encourage food manufacturers to replace more and more refined cereal ingredients with whole grains' said Alastair Ross.

The proposed *whole-grain food* definition is currently for guidance only but the Healthgrain Forum calls on public health authorities, dietary associations and national governments to apply this new definition in future legislation to ensure that whole grains are sufficiently represented and characterised in food and nutrition guidelines. This will fuel greater awareness of whole grains and increase their consumption.

The 6th [International Whole Grain Summit](#), taking place in Vienna on 13-15 November 2017, will be an important forum for a wide range of stakeholders to discuss the new definition and other key topics related to increasing whole-grain intake for better health.

For further information, please contact Alastair Ross (alastair.ross@chalmers.se; chair of the group that developed the definition) and Jan-Willem van der Kamp (jan-willem.vanderkamp@tno.nl; Healthgrain Forum communications spokesperson).

The new paper on the wholegrain food definition is available for free download [here](#).