

Food products: eating in Estonia

Food is the most important factor that affects health in the living environment. We get our nutrients and energy from food, but below-par, one-sided or tainted food can also cause several diseases. There is a growing pan-European tendency for illnesses caused by tainted food.

The main eating suggestion for all healthy people is: eat well-balanced, diverse and nutritionally value food.

Food requirements:

1. Food must be safe for human health;
2. Food must not contain parasites, pests or foreign bodies that reduce its quality or endanger human health;
3. It is forbidden to process spoiled, tainted or microbiologically inadequate raw food materials and food;
4. Food must correspond to the requirements for the ingredients and quality;
5. Fresh meat or meat in any other form must have been declared fit for consumption by the veterinary inspection. The consumption quality is verified by a veterinary certificate.

Well-balanced and diverse eating provides the body with the necessary nutrients. Keep an eye also on the amount of food and keep an optimum body weight, be physically active, eat more fruit and vegetables, berries, milk and dairy products, full grain products, fish and poultry; select food that has less fat and salt; prefer healthy cooking habits. If you consume alcohol, keep the amounts reasonable. All this will give you the sufficient food energy and strips the need for food supplements.

However, there may be situations in life where the consumption of food supplements is beneficial or even crucial for the body. For example, intestinal problems, irregular meals or one-sided food may lead to inadequate consumption of vitamins and minerals. Infectious diseases and antibiotic treatment can also reduce the consumption or availability of microsubstances. In this case, food supplements are necessary.

A food supplement is a nutrient or mix of nutrients that is not a drug or drug-like substance and is added to the food to satisfy the body's nutritional needs. Nutrients include vitamins, minerals, amino acids, irreplaceable fat acids, fibers, vegetable and animal extracts, fresh or dried plant parts and other similar substances.

Special food is the type of food that is meant for people who have different than normal eating habits due to digestion or metabolism deviations or physical status. Special food is therefore produced either with special technology or has different ingredients when compared to normal food. Examples of special food include the milk mixes and foods for infants and children, diet foods, food for athletes and people suffering from diabetes. Importing these foods requires processing permits. Either the producers, packagers or importers must apply for the processing permit.

Organic farming is a production form that considers the principles of natural substance cycle where the relationship between the soil, plants and animals is balanced. Such a system is able to replenish consumed substances and can only be successful if there is harmonic cooperation between all parties.

Organic processing means the processing of organically farmed raw food materials or food, if the food is to be marketed with the organic farming label. The company that deals with organic processing must have been certified according to the Organic Farming Act and its data must be entered into the organic farming registry. In order to receive the organic processing certificate, the processor will present an application and the required data and documents to the Veterinary and Food Board.

The organic label has been used since 2001 and is the state's guarantee that the labeled product has fulfilled the requirements of the Organic Farming Act.

Specially labelled foodstuffs

Foodstuffs have received special labels for several years now in Estonia. The purpose of these labels is to help the consumer to navigate on the diverse food market and to outline the competitive advantages of fine and high-quality Estonian products, making the consumer's choice easier.

The Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce started designing a label for the quality of foodstuffs in 1997. The Renowned Taste **quality label**, the clover label, is given to products produced in Estonia that have successfully passed the laboratory and sensory evaluations. The origins of the raw materials used to make the product are not important for receiving the clover label.

The Renowned Estonian Taste **origin label** (the swallow label) is given to products made of 100% Estonian materials and having successfully passed the laboratory and sensory evaluations. All entrepreneurs entered into the Business Registry can apply for the usage of the label, if they can documentally verify the local origin of the main raw materials used to make the product.

The goal for issuing the quality and origin label is:

- To value the Estonian product on the Estonian market;
- To support the domestic sale and export of Estonian foodstuffs;
- To offer competitive advantages;
- To motivate companies to use Estonian raw materials in their production;
- To increase consumer trust in the quality of domestic products.

Information presented or linked to increase consumer awareness on the website www.tartutarbija.ee:

1. *Graphs of Toxic pollution in food*, by Information and Technology centre of Estonian Ministry of the Environment (www.keskkonnainfo.ee)
2. Heavy metals in fish and sea bottom fauna (Raskemetallid kalades ja põhjaloomastikus): www.keskkonnainfo.ee/index.php?lan=EE&sid=87&tid=84&l2=43&l1=2
3. Use of pesticides (pestitsiidide kasutamine): <http://www.keskkonnainfo.ee/index.php?lan=EE&sid=89&tid=86&l2=43&l1=2>
4. Organic pollution in fish (orgaanilised saasteained kalades): <http://www.keskkonnainfo.ee/index.php?lan=EE&sid=86&tid=83&l2=43&l1=2>
5. *Pollutants in food*, by Ministry of Agriculture (www.agri.ee) For detailed evaluations in English or English and Estonian, see “[erinevaid seireprogramme alates 1998 aastast](#).” At www.agri.ee/?id=10714 Or click on the links below: The Estonian Monitoring of Pesticide Residues in Food of Plant Origin 2006 (in English) <http://www.agri.ee/public/juurkataloog/TOIDUOHUTUS/UURINGUD/Taimekaitsevahendite%20j22kide%20seire%202006.%20aastal.pdf>; Estonian National Monitoring Programme of Food Additives 2006 (NB! dual-language document) http://www.agri.ee/public/juurkataloog/TOIDUOHUTUS/Lisaainete_seire_2006_kokku.pdf Estonian National Monitoring Programme of Food Contaminants 2006 (NB! dual-language document) http://www.agri.ee/public/juurkataloog/TOIDUOHUTUS/Saasteainete_seire_2006_kokku.pdf

Details of the Programme:

Investigations were provided about:

1. aflatoxin M1, B1, B2, G1, G2 ;
2. N-nitrosoamines;
3. Lead, cadmium, mercury, arsenic;
4. Ochratoxin A;
5. Patulin;
6. Polyaromatic hydrocarbons.

Concentrations exceeding max permitted concentration values were not detected. But lead was detected in 8%, cadmium in 16%, mercury in 96% and arsenic in 56% of studied fish samples.

6. Estonian Eating and Food Recommendations, presented at Health Protection Inspectorate (www.tervisekaitse.ee), available in Estonian only: http://www.tervisekaitse.ee/documents/toitumine/Raamatu_sisu.pdf

7. Information about risks of mechanically (de)boned meat, food radiating and fluor in foods by Estonian association of manufacturers of meat, at <http://www.ela.ee/index.php?act=auskaup&o=3> (Estonian only)
8. Chemical Risk Factors in Food, a seminar paper by Marina Karro, presented at Health Protection Inspectorate at http://www.tervisekaitse.ee/documents/toit/Keemilised_riskitegurid_toidus.pdf
9. Organic production and farming, by Plant Production Inspectorate (www.plant.agri.ee) (Estonian only) - <http://www.plant.agri.ee/?op=body&id=19> (see links on the left)
10. *GMO survey in Estonia 2001-2005* (Estonian only) Kokkuvõtte GMO seirest 2001-2005
11. *Consumer opinion about GMO crops (2005)* (Estonian only) Tarbija arvamus GM-põllukultuuridest
12. *Novel food and GMO foods in Estonia* (Estonian only) Uuendtoit ja GMO Eestis
13. *Who knows what we eat? (2005)* (Estonian only) Kes teab, mida me sööme?(2005)
14. *Food and health (2006)* (Estonian only) a manual by Tiiu Müürsepp Toit ja tervis (2006)
15. *Healthy & Unhealthy eating: food additives and pollutants in food and how to avoid them (2008) a manual by Edvin Aedma (available in Estonian only) Tervislik & ebatervislik toitumine: Millised on kahjulikud lisaained ja koostisosad toidus ja kuidas neid vältida 2008*
16. *Regulation no 34 issued in 10.04.2008 by Minister of Agriculture of Estonia "The list of allowed synthetic pesticide trace levels in foods"* (in Estonian only) Põllumajandusministri 10.aprill 2008 määrus nr.34 "Toidus lubatud keemiliste taimekaitsevahendite jääkide loetelu ja normid" www.riigiteataja.ee/ert/act.jsp?id=12952293

Foodstuffs in Sweden

The overall goal of Swedish food policy is ecologically, economically and socially sustainable food production. Swedish food has reaped a number of successes in recent years thanks to excellent Swedish primary products, a traditional Swedish cuisine and competent industries. Areas such as research, primary production, the food industry, restaurants and retailers have also shown an ability to cooperate.

The National Food Administration is the central administrative authority for matters concerning food. One of the main tasks of the National Food Administration is to guide consumers towards healthy dietary habits. The NFA is responsible for the Swedish nutrition recommendations as well as dietary recommendations to different groups in the population. The Swedish Food Database provides information on the nutritional composition of approximately 2000 foods and dishes, mostly Swedish. The information is continuously updated and new data added.

The main aim is to provide nutrient information on representative foods on the Swedish market and to enable the National Food Administration (NFA) to calculate energy and nutrient intakes from diet surveys performed at the NFA. Nutrients included in the Swedish nutrient recommendations are prioritised in the data.

For each food data on 52 nutrients are presented. In addition, information on analytical methods, calculations and factors used in the calculations is available. For the mixed foods ingredients and proportions are listed. When the food composition data is updated a file listing all changes is published.

Free on-line access to Swedish food composition data via the link: <http://192.121.81.11/livsmedelsok/sok.aspx?lang=2>

The National Food Administration's keyhole symbol is there to help consumers identify the healthier options when buying food or eating out.

Foods labelled with the keyhole symbol are leaner and contain less sugars and salt and more fibre than food products of the same type not carrying the symbol.



By choosing foods with the keyhole symbol it is easier for consumers to improve their diet, which can lead to better health now and in the future.

Fat, sugars, salt and dietary fiber

Most people in Sweden eat the wrong kinds of fat, too much sugars and salt and too small amounts of dietary fiber. Foods labelled with the keyhole symbol contain less fat, has a healthier fat composition, contain less sugars and salt and more dietary fiber than other foods of the same type. For example, bread that carry the keyhole symbol contain more dietary fiber but less fat, salt and sugars than bread not carrying the symbol.

Why choose foods with the keyhole symbol?

The lifestyle we choose affects our health. By eating healthier foods and taking more exercise we can reduce our risk of developing obesity, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, high blood pressure, certain forms of cancer and osteoporosis. Eating a healthy diet also reduces the risks of dental caries and constipation.

Who can eat foods with the keyhole symbol?

Foods labelled with the keyhole symbol are suitable for all healthy individuals – adults, teenagers and children over two years of age. Foods carrying the keyhole symbol are not 'diet foods' but are intended for everyone who wants to eat a healthy diet.

Some groups of people may need to eat foods that provide the body with extra energy, for example elderly people who have trouble maintaining their body weight, people suffering from certain diseases and those involved in hard physical activity. These people may need foods that do not carry the keyhole symbol.

What foods can be labelled with the keyhole symbol?

Foods eligible to carry the keyhole symbol must fulfil certain conditions specified by the National Food Administration. These conditions – regarding how much fat, sugars, salt and dietary fiber may be present in foods with the keyhole symbol – are based on the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations, which are founded on scientific research.

Different conditions apply to different groups of foods. For example, table margarine with the keyhole symbol may contain more fat than milk with the keyhole. However, consumers do not need to bother about the conditions that apply. Anyone choosing a food product with the keyhole symbol knows that it is a healthier option than corresponding products that are not allowed to carry this symbol.

Foods with the keyhole symbol

The keyhole is a voluntary label. Food producers are themselves responsible for ensuring that foods with the keyhole symbol conform to National Food Administration regulations.

Below is a list of examples of different products that may be labelled with the keyhole symbol. For further information on the regulations regarding different foods, see directive LIVSFS 2005:9 via the link on the right of this page.

Dairy products

Dairy products with the keyhole symbol contain less fat, salt and sugars than corresponding products not labelled with the symbol.

Examples of dairy products carrying the keyhole symbol:

- Skimmed milk, low fat milk or natural yoghurt (maximum 0.5% fat);
- Flavoured low fat yoghurt (maximum 0.5% fat);

- Low fat alternatives to cream and crème fraiche (maximum 5% fat);
- Processed cheese (maximum 10% fat);
- Fresh cheese, for example Cottage cheese (maximum 5% fat);
- Other cheese, for example hard cheese and margarine cheese (maximum 17% fat).

Flavoured yoghurt that contains sweeteners cannot carry the keyhole.

Low fat spread/reduced fat margarine

Low fat spread/reduced fat margarine with the keyhole symbol may contain a limited amount of salt and a maximum of 41% fat. A maximum of one third of the fat may be saturated fat and transfat. According to manufacturers, there is now no industrially produced transfat present in the keyhole-labelled low fat spread/reduced fat margarines sold in Swedish shops.

Meat and processed meat products

Whole meat and minced meat with the keyhole symbol may contain maximum 10% fat. This limit also applies to processed meat products, with or without gravies, such as sausages, meatballs, hamburgers, cold cuts, liver paste and black pudding.

Fish and shellfish

All types of fresh or frozen fish, both lean and oily, may carry the keyhole symbol. The reason is that fish contain beneficial fats that most people need to eat in greater amounts. Examples of lean fish are cod and haddock, while mackerel and salmon are oily fish.

Shellfish such as prawns, mussels and crab may contain maximum 10% fat. This limit also applies to fishballs and other fish products, with or without gravies.

Vegetarian products

Vegetarian alternatives to milk, for example oat, soya and rice drinks, may contain maximum 1.5% fat, but no added sugars and no sweeteners. Vegetarian alternatives to cream and crème fraiche may contain maximum 5% fat.

Meat, fish and shellfish substitutes that are made solely from vegetable products, for example soya or Quorn, may contain maximum 10% fat.

Bread, pasta, breakfast cereals, flour and wholemeal

Bread carrying the keyhole symbol must have a higher fibre content than bread not eligible for the symbol, and may only contain limited amounts of fat and salt. Soft bread may contain maximum 10% sugars.

Pasta with the keyhole symbol must contain a certain amount of fibre.

Breakfast cereals and muesli must contain a certain amount of fibre, maximum 13% sugars, 7% fat and a limited amount of salt if they are to be labelled with the keyhole symbol.

Flour, flakes and wholemeal must contain a certain amount of fibre. This also applies for porridge meal, porridge powder and gruel powder, which have additional restrictions on fat and salt content.

Ready meals

Ready meals, intended to constitute a main meal, labelled with the keyhole symbol must contain between 400 and 750 kcal. Maximum 30% of the energy content may come from fat. The amount of sugars and salt is also limited. Such meals must contain at least 80 grams of root vegetables (excl. potatoes), legumes and other vegetables and/or fruit per serving.

In pies (except dessert pies), pizzas, pirogi and soups with the keyhole symbol, maximum 30% of the energy content may come from fat and the amount of sugars and salt is limited.

Potatoes and vegetables

Potatoes, root vegetables, leguminous plants and other vegetables which have not undergone any form of processing; however, they may have been seasoned, blanched, dried, refrigerated, deep-frozen or defrosted.

Fruits and berries

All types of fruit and berries that are fresh, chilled or frozen and that do not contain any added sugars are eligible to carry the keyhole symbol.

Plan of action for healthy eating habits and increased physical activity in the Swedish population.

The Government commissioned in 2004 the National Food Administration (NFA) and the National Institute of Public Health (IPH), after consultation with specified actors, to produce a proposal for a plan of action for healthy eating habits and increased physical activity in the Swedish population. The aim of such an action plan is to introduce measures to improve the prerequisites for healthy dietary habits and physical activity in order to contribute to the overall public health aim: 'To create social conditions which ensure good health, on equal terms, for the entire population.'

Objectives and targets. Objectives regarding societal measures for healthy dietary habits and increased physical activity:

1. Society should be organised in such a way as to make it is easy for all groups in the population to have healthy dietary habits.
2. Society should be organised in such a way as to provide the conditions for increased physical activity for all groups in the population.

Quantifiable targets for healthy dietary habits:

1. Increase consumption of fruit and vegetables.
2. Increase consumption of keyhole-labelled food.
3. Decrease consumption of foods such as soft drinks, sweets, ice cream, crisps, cakes and cookies, and alcoholic drinks.

A comparison of a diet fulfilling all the nutrition recommendations for the average Swedish diet shows that the most significant changes in diet from a public health perspective would be to:

- Double the consumption of fruit and vegetables (recommended consumption is at least 500 grams per day for adults and approximately 400 grams per day for children 4-10 years).
- Double the consumption of bread, particularly wholegrain bread (recommended consumption is 150-200 grams of bread per day).
- Change to liquid cooking fats and oils.
- Choose keyhole-labelled dairy and processed meat products.
- Double the consumption of fish (recommended consumption is 2-3 times per week).
- Halve the intake of salt (recommended intake is 5-6 grams per day).
- Halve the consumption of soft drinks, sweets, ice cream, crisps, cakes, cookies and alcoholic drinks (max. 15 per cent of energy intake should come from such products, including alcohol, which should not exceed 5 per cent of energy intake).

Quantifiable targets for physical activity

1. Increase the proportion of healthy adults who take at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day, or in total at least 3.5 hours per week.
2. Increase the proportion of healthy children who are physically active for at least 60 minutes of moderate exercise every day, or in total at least 7 hours per week.
3. Decrease the proportion of children and adults with a sedentary lifestyle.

Quantifiable targets for body weight:

1. Prevent weight gain from normal to overweight in adults.
2. Promote normal weight gain in children.

Changes in society have had a considerable effect on dietary habits and physical activity. To improve people's dietary habits and increase their physical activity, changes must first be directed at the societal level, where the prerequisites for healthy dietary habits and physical activity are formed, so that it becomes easy to have a healthy lifestyle. It is particularly important to influence the supply, availability and/or demand for food and physical activity in combination with consistent messages about healthy dietary habits and physical activity. Experience shows that people more often make healthy choices if the surrounding environment is supportive. On the basis of the Swedish public health policy, the WHO global strategy on diet, physical activity and health and current research in public health, the strategy for achieving the targets set for healthy dietary habits, physical activity and body weight is as follows:

- Measures must be directed at both the societal and individual level.
- Measures must be long-term.
- Resources must be made available for implementation.
- Measures must be coordinated at the national, regional and local level.
- Measures must build on partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- Measures at the national level are incorporated into those government policy areas which have the greatest influence on people's dietary habits and physical activity.
- Interventions must take local conditions into consideration and be based on public participation.
- Evaluation and monitoring must be continuously integrated into the process.