



The Keyhole

What is the Keyhole?

The Keyhole is a positive food label that identifies healthy food products within each food category. Foods labelled with the symbol contain less fat, sugars and salt and more dietary fibre than food products of the same type not carrying the symbol. There are 25 product groups with different criteria for dietary fat, sugars, salt and dietary fibre. Different conditions apply to different groups of foods.

The Keyhole symbol represents a healthier option than corresponding products that are not allowed to carry this symbol.

Why the Keyhole symbol?

There are two main objectives for introducing the Keyhole labelling system. One is to assist in and to give the opportunity to all consumers in making healthier food choices and to easier identify healthier food products. A simple and positive logo is seen as a quick and effective tool in a busy purchase situation and appeal to many consumer groups in the population.

The second is to stimulate manufacturers to move product innovation, development and reformulation in a healthier direction.

Based on evaluation of existing health labelling systems, consumer studies, involvement from relevant parties and collaboration with the other Nordic countries, it was recommended to introduce the Keyhole system because it;

- is easy to understand for everyone in the population
- requires minimal pre-existing knowledge about nutrition
- does not require language skills
- is used on food products that are important in a healthy diet
- is accepted by the food manufacturing industry
- can contribute toward reducing social differences related to health

The Keyhole will make healthy foods more accessible, which is in line with the objectives laid down in the Nordic Plan of Action on better health and quality of life through diet and physical activity¹ in 2006 and the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health².

It is also recognized that consumers have a desire for full and complete information which directly contradicts their desire for simplicity and wanting to be able to choose healthier food products more quickly at the store. Some consumers are more focused on nutrition and health, and read the nutritional declaration on the back of the packaging. It is therefore seen as a great advantage that the use of the Keyhole system also triggers mandatory nutritional declaration on the back of the packaging.

A Nordic symbol

The Keyhole was established in Sweden in 1989 and became a common Nordic label for healthier food products in Denmark, Sweden and Norway 17th of June 2009. The model has been accepted throughout the Nordic Region.

¹ Nordic Plan of Action on better health and quality of life through diet and physical activity. A better life through diet and physical activity, Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen 2006

² WHO/FAO Global Strategy on diet, physical activity and health (2003)

The Food Authorities in the three countries have set new joint criteria based on the existing Swedish regulation. The Nordic co-operation on the Keyhole system has been built on the Nordic Nutritional Recommendations (NNR)³, upon which the government's nutritional recommendations are based in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. In Norway the Implementation of a labelling system to make healthier choices easier is a follow-up to the government's "Action plan for an improved diet among the population (2007 - 2011) - Recipe for healthier eating"¹.

On the basis of the great similarities in eating and buying patterns in the three countries we have had great success in developing a common food label. Although the overall challenges are similar, some differences do exist and these national differences are factored into the labelling scheme.

What foods can be labelled with the Keyhole?

All pre-packaged foods that fulfil the common criteria concerning fat, sugars, salt and dietary fibre, specified in the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian regulation on the Keyhole labelling are eligible to carry the Keyhole symbol. Fish and seafood, fruits, vegetables and potatoes can be labelled without packaging. The Keyhole system will not include food products and food groups that have a particularly high energy content and/or low nutrient value.

The Keyhole is voluntary and free of charge to use. The Swedish National Food Administration has registered the keyhole as a trademark and the manufacturers that use the symbol are responsible for fulfilling the criteria according to the regulation.

Acceptance by the manufacturers and stores

The use of the labelling system is voluntary; hence the acceptance from the manufacturers and stores was crucial in establishing the Keyhole label. At an early stage the industry clearly expressed that they would like a positive label that points out the healthier choices.

In a Nordic management, the three countries with the respective Food Authorities have had an efficient dialogue and cooperation with the retail stores, manufacturers, nutritionists and relevant trade-organisations. This has been important in the work on information campaigns towards consumers.

Evaluation

The Authorities in the three countries evaluate the labelling system through a variation of consumer surveys and through market analysis where the development in the number and sales value of the Keyhole labelled products on the market is examined. The consumer surveys show that a half year after implementing the Keyhole system in Norway, nine out of ten consumers responsible for the grocery shopping recognises the Keyhole label. By April 2010 there are many products on the market that qualify for and use the Keyhole label, however the consumers request for a greater selection of products bearing the Keyhole label.

Contact information

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For more information see the Norwegian website for the Keyhole:

<http://www.nokkelhullsmarket.no/nokkelhull/siteContent/article128.ece>

³ Nordic Nutrition Recommendations, 2004. 4th edition. *Integrating nutrition and physical activity*, Nordic council of Ministers, Copenhagen 2004

