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## **Denmark**

# **Danish Government Restricts Functional Foods**

## **1998**

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### **Report Highlights:**

**The Government of Denmark's Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries maintains one of the most restrictive interpretations of EU food regulations regarding enriched foods and health claims. The Ministry's ban on enriched/functional foods prevents U.S. companies from exporting these food products to the Danish market.**

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Includes PSD changes: No

Includes Trade Matrix: No

Unscheduled Report

Copenhagen [DA1], DA

The Government of Denmark's Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries has one of the most restrictive interpretations of food regulations regarding health claims and enriched/functional foods in the European Union (EU). Although many other EU member states, such as the Netherlands, have liberalized their interpretation of EU regulations, the Danish Government continues to maintain a ban on the addition of vitamins and nutrients to food products (with the exception of iodine to salt). As a result, many U.S. companies are prevented from exporting enriched and/or functional foods to the Danish market.

The Danish industry does not support the Government's position. Instead, the industry supports labeling foods that have added vitamins/minerals as health foods. Danish consumer groups and the Food and Agriculture Ministry are opposed to this on the premise that enriched/functional foods are not necessary if consumers eat a healthy and varied diet.

Although there are some "health foods" that are permitted for sale in the Danish market (such as yoghurt with special cultures), health claims on product packaging are not permitted. All medical health claims referring to the prevention or treatment of an illness are forbidden. The Food Minister, Henrik Dam Kristensen, has stated that he will not allow advertising for health foods because it will potentially mislead consumers causing them to believe that they can have a better life if they eat specific products. Without the prospect of developing such products for the Danish market, the Danish industry is concerned that they could lose their competitive position in foreign markets.

The Danish importer of Ocean Spray cranberry juice (enriched with vitamin C) is testing the Danish regulation with the Austrian energy drink *Red Bull*, a juice drink enriched with vitamins and minerals. The European Commission has written a letter to the Danish Government on behalf of the importer describing the Danish regulation as a technical trade barrier and against EU regulations. In turn, the Danish Minister has told the Parliament that he will not change the Danish regulations before scientific research has proven that increased consumption of vitamins and minerals are not a health risk. This policy is backed by the Danish Consumer's Council.

As part of a series of Government reports entitled "Denmark as a Leading Country", the Food Ministry recently published a report on food safety. The report maintains that excessive and random consumption of additives in the form of vitamins and minerals in enriched/functional foods may lead to a considerable health risk for a major part of the population. However, a product with a documented effect on the Danish public health situation should be approved. The report concluded that the Danes, in general, are undernourished with vitamin-D and suggested that vitamin-D be added to a basic food item (e.g. milk). The only additive currently permitted to be added to a food product in Denmark is iodine in salt which is intended to prevent struma.