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Dutch Food Company Adds Nutri-score to Packaged Products

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

Agriculture in the News

Vegetables

Agriculture in the Economy

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Report Highlights:

Dutch food company, HAK, introduced Nutri-score logos on their products on September 1, 2019, which the company says will enable consumers to make healthier choices when buying food. The Dutch consumers association, the retailers association, and others support the introduction of this logo. However, the Dutch food processing industry prefers to wait for the outcome of a Dutch Ministry of Health investigation of several schemes before selecting a logo to endorse. Since this is a voluntary logo, companies are not obligated to use it because labeling requirements are fully harmonized within the European Union (EU). Accordingly, Dutch food companies and U.S. exporters targeting the Dutch market are not required to comply with this labeling scheme.

General Information:

Beginning in September 2019, Dutch food company, HAK, started supplying Dutch supermarkets with products carrying the Nutri-score label. The company says this labeling scheme will help to inform consumers about the nutritional quality of a food product and enable them to make healthier choices when buying food products in supermarkets.

The Nutri-score, a nutrition label, is a color-coded scheme associated with the letters from A to E. It was first developed by nutritional researchers at Oxford University in the United Kingdom, and further developed to what it is today in France. Products that carry the Nutri-score are positioned on a scale of five levels, ranging from A (the most nutritionally favorable product) to E (the least nutritionally favorable product). The score is calculated based on a system that takes into account the total nutritional value, whereby positive and negative elements are weighed against each other. For example, the content of sugar, saturated fatty acids, calories, and salt have a negative influence on the score, while the content of fruits, vegetables, fibers and proteins improves the score.

Example of the Nutri-score label:



In the Netherlands, HAK, along with Iglo, are the first Dutch food companies to introduce the label on their products. In a press release, HAK encouraged other food companies to follow, believing that this label will eventually result in a higher per-capita consumption of vegetables and pulses in the Netherlands; products that HAK is known for. According to the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, with consumption of 131 grams of vegetables and 5 grams of pulses consumed on-average per day, the Dutch rank among the lowest in Europe in consumption of these foods. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre recommends doubling the current daily intake.

Example of the label on HAK's products



The Nutri-score scheme is already widely used by retailers in France and Belgium, see [Belgium Adopts Nutri-Score for Front of Pack Nutritional Labeling](#). The Dutch consumers' Association, known as Consumentenbond, along with its sister organizations in six other EU countries, has launched a citizens' initiative (petition) to collect at least 1 million signatures in the EU (which would mean that the European Commission would have to put their request on the agenda for discussion). Other supporters of Nutri-score include the Dutch Food Retailers Association, CBL (representing the interests of supermarkets and other food distributing companies), and the non-

profit organization, Foodwatch.

In the meantime, the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport is investigating the introduction of a new logo that will help consumers making better food choices, which includes the Nutri-score among other schemes. The Dutch umbrella organization of food companies, the Federatie Nederlandse Levensmiddelen Industries or FNLI, says it prefers to wait for the outcome of the investigation before it endorses a labeling scheme. However, FNLI points out that the Netherlands cannot impose an obligation on companies to use a new logo because labeling requirements are fully harmonized in the EU (see, e.g., <http://www.usda-eu.org/trade-with-the-eu/eu-import-rules/eu-labeling-requirements/>). As a result, Dutch food companies and U.S. exporters targeting the Dutch market do not have to comply with this labeling scheme.