



DIVINFOOD

Co-constructing interactive short and mid-tier food chains
to value agrobiodiversity in healthy plant-based FOOD

Introducing the Danish Legume Partnership

Summary

The Danish Legume Partnership is a newly established partnership that aims to promote Danes' intake of pulses to support the target from the official dietary guidelines of 100 grams of prepared legumes daily. Legumes are a broad food group that embraces many species and varieties - and many of which we can profitably grow in Europe.

Introduction

In 2021, Denmark launched a new set of official dietary guidelines taking both health and climate into account¹. With these guidelines, recommended intake of legumes was quantified to 100 grams of prepared legumes per day – twice the amount of meat. However, legumes currently play a minor role in the Danish food culture. There is a big knowledge gap among private operators and professionals regarding legumes, including a lack of kitchen and cooking skills for using pulses. The Danish Legume Partnership is one of several initiatives aiming to support a structural transition in dietary habits by bringing many different actors from the value chain together with a common goal. The efforts to enhance legume consumption in Denmark has enabled synergies with the focus of the DivinFood project: promoting European agrobiodiversity by promoting the local farming of neglected species of legumes and mild processing techniques.

Solution

Changing a food culture is a task that requires a united front from many stakeholders: companies from across the entire value chain (from farm to table), public and private organisations, and NGOs. In this case, quantification of a recommended intake of legumes in the official dietary guidelines from 2021 has been the leveraging creating a Danish Legume Partnership² (Figure 1).

Prior to the creation of the legume partnership, the Vegetarian Society of Denmark in 2020 established a Network for Future Plant Proteins.³ The network organised regular knowledge sharing events relevant for different stakeholders in the value chain of legumes and other protein-rich crops from farm to table. While this network grew to more than 200 stakeholders, parallel work took place to engage key stakeholders in a legume alliance aiming to coordinate efforts that could promote the demand for legumes among citizens and food professionals. The legume alliance was coordinated first by the Danish Cancer Society and the Vegetarian Society of Denmark, later through assistance from the Danish Agriculture & Food Council.

None of the stakeholders involved in the alliance had a commercial aim with their engagement, as they were a mix of organisations working on health, sustainability or promoting local or organic food production. Meetings were held in the alliance and project funds were sought e.g., in the newly established Plant-Based Food Grant⁴.



Figure 1 The logo for the Danish Legume Partnership. Created by the thinktank frej.

The Danish Whole Grain Partnership⁵, a successful public-private partnership promoted since 2009, has facilitated a significant increase in the average daily intake of whole grains among Danes. Indeed daily intake increased from 36 grams/10 MJ in 2009 to 82 grams/10 MJ in 2019, which inspired the establishment of a Danish Legume Partnership. However, as the commercial market for legumes is yet underdeveloped in Denmark, a different economic model for the partnership was needed (e.g., private investments or grants). A real partnership with a secretariat only became possible when a private actor chose to invest 2 million Danish kroner in a partnership run by the *thinktank frej* in 2024 (figure 2). Within 3 months, 45 partners ranging from private food companies, wholesalers, municipalities and vocational schools have joined and committed to promote the market for legumes. Ideally, the financial model will be transferred to public funding or grants when the initial operating expenses have made a strong foundation for the partnership. In the long term, it is expected that the partnership can be run using membership fees. The work to increase the general demand for legumes, is a prerequisite for building a market for local farming of neglected species of legumes.

Benefits (and limits) for practitioners

Quantification of a recommended intake of legumes in the official dietary guidelines from 2021 has been a lever to create the Danish Legume Partnership. However, prior to the formalisation of the partnership, networks and alliances were made to bring the stakeholders from the entire value chain together. The partners in the Legume Partnership commit to promote the market for legumes, which in turn will lead to an increased demand for neglected species of legumes.



Figure 2: Launch of the Danish Legume Partnership, march 2024. (Photographer/Institution: ThinkTank frej)

Further information

Further readings

- ¹Official Danish dietary guideline in English: <https://en.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/food/nutrition-and-health/the-official-dietary-guidelines>
- ²Webpage of the Danish Legume Partnership (in Danish): <https://www.baelgfrugtpartnerskabet.dk/>
- ³Description in Danish of the Network for Future plant proteins: <https://vegetarisk.dk/planteproteiner/>
- ⁴Description of the Danish Plant-Based Food Grant: <https://plantefonden.lbst.dk/the-plant-based-food-grant>
- ⁵Description of the Whole Grain Partnership: <https://fuldkorn.dk/en/about-us>

About this practice abstract and DIVINFOOD

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DIVINFOOD - Co-constructing interactive short and mid-tier food chains to value agrobioDiversity IN healthy plant-based FOOD, is running from **March 2022** to **Feb 2027**.

The overall goal of DIVINFOOD (a multi-actor, participatory project) is to facilitate the use and increase the value of Neglected and Underutilised Crops (NUCs) in food chains to foster healthier diets and more sustainable food systems.

Project website: www.divinfood.eu

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