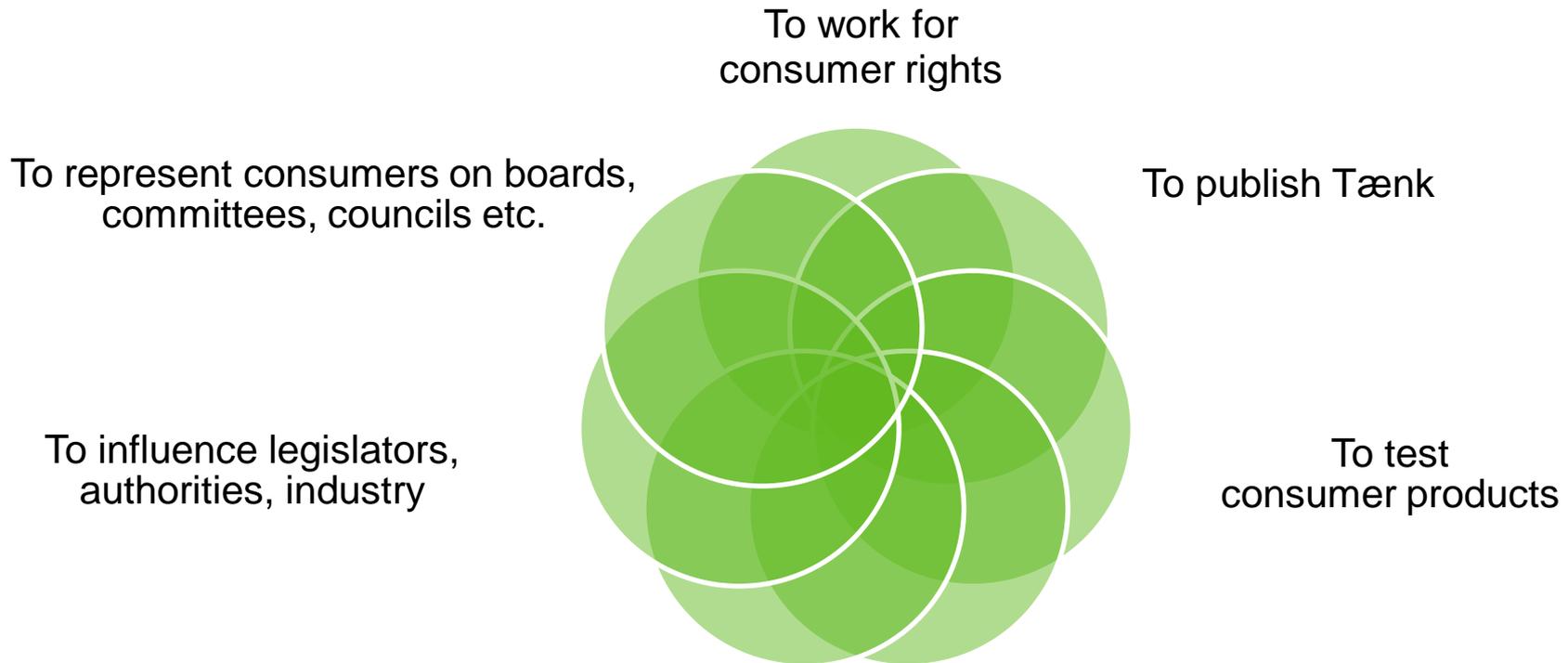


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# The importance of health claims for consumers

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# The purpose of Danish Consumer Council



*We make change for the benefit of consumers*



- 42 members in 31 countries
- BEUC has 3 seats in the EFSA Stakeholder Platform
- <http://beuc.eu/>

## The *importance* of health claims?

- Health claims not allowed in Denmark before 2007
- Misleading claims in other countries
- The Danish Consumer Council has been and is sceptical towards health claims due to risk of misleading information and the high focus on single products and single substances
- Consumer studies show that Danish consumers share this scepticism

## Why health claims?

The aim:

To inform and not  
mislead the consumer

To sell products

Preconditions:

1. Scientifically  
based claims

2. No conflicts  
with other  
nutrition  
messages

3. The consumer  
must understand  
the claim

4. Relevance of  
the claim

# 1. Scientifically based claims

- Evaluation by EFSA NDA panel
- Strict evaluation is necessary
- Also in relation to botanicals

## 2. No conflicts with other nutrition messages

- Nutrient profiles essential
- Nutrient profiles supposed to be established by January 2009 – BEFORE the Article 13 list
- Pressure in EU against nutrition profiles
- How will Article 13 claims be used without nutrition profile?

# Nutrient profiles: What do we do?

- Answers to hearings
- Cooperation with health organisations
- Dialogue with politicians and authorities
- Direct event towards MEPs March 2010 – doughnuts



## Nutrient profiles: What do we do?

- Webbased quiz
- Leaflet in Danish, English and German
- Electronic postcards to Danish MEPs June 2010
- Conference on nutrient profiles August 2010
- Participated in hearing in German Bundestag



- More info on [www.taenk.dk/anprisninger](http://www.taenk.dk/anprisninger)

### 3. The consumer must understand the claim

- According to the regulation, claims should be understood by an average consumer, but who is that?
- The Article 13 claims may be hard to understand, BUT that reflects the scientific evidence
- If messages are made more simple, the health effects are overestimated
- If a claim cannot be understood, it should not be used
- Test of consumer understanding should be initiated

## 4. Relevance of the claim

- Some statistics: The article 13 list consists of 222 claims:
  - 87 related to vitamins ~ 39%
  - 75 related to minerals ~ 34%
  - 60 related to other substances ~ 27%
- Estimated that 70-80% relate to substances with no general deficiencies in the population
- Vitamins etc. have vital functions *by definition*
- Scientific data based on deficiency data
- No extra health benefit from extra supplement
- Many claims are irrelevant: *risk of overestimation of health benefits by consumers*

## Looking forward

- Nutrient profiles must be established as soon as possible
  - Clear position of how to deal with authorised claims with no nutrient profiles established
- Avoid overestimation of health benefits by consumers
  - General EU rules of misleading labelling
  - Relevance should be taken into account when possible
  - Avoid too much flexibility of the wordings
  - Consumer studies to test understanding
- Strict evaluation of botanicals needed

## A reminder

- The largest health problem related to food is the too high intake of salt, sugar, saturated fat and energy, and the too little intake of fruit, vegetables, fish and wholegrain. A solution to that is NOT to move consumer focus to single vitamins and minerals and other substances
- Other ways to communicate nutrition information exists
- Restriction of the use of health claims is NOT about banning certain products

Thank you for your attention

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