

## Milk and dairy products among health protecting food products

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### Summary

*The Slovenian Heart Foundation confers the trademark "Protects health" which is a label in the shape of a heart under which the inscription "Protects health" and favourable properties of the product may be found (description of the product).*

*The trademark is conferred to particular alimentary products - protecting foods and proper menus in restaurants - protecting menus. Among the most important risk factors for the development of civilization diseases, where the heart disease and blood pressure have the leading role, is undoubtedly unhealthy nutrition. It is possible to teach people how to select healthy food and to stimulate food processing industry to produce more healthy food - protecting foods. The trademark of a protecting food may be a good guide in this case.*

*There are many dairy products among protecting foods. These are milk and dairy products made of skimmed milk. Like all other foods they have to meet the requirements for evaluation of foods following the directives of the World Health Organization.*

*These requirements include the following parameters: level of fats, saturated fatty acids, cholesterol, salts, sugar, fibres, energy value. Dairy products safe for human consumption are evaluated according to low fats, saturated fats and cholesterol and low energy value. The adequacy of foods is evaluated by an independent Commission for conferring the right to use the trademark "Protects health".*

*Key words: milk, milk products, health protecting foods*

### Introduction

The Slovenian Heart Foundation is a powerful non-governmental organization, which has been active since 1992. It has more than 6000 members and impressive number of external collaborators in the field of medicine, nutrition, sports and school system throughout Slovenia.

The activities of the Foundation are mainly focused on prevention of coronary heart diseases, thus reducing mortality which is still very high in Slovenia; although it has dropped in the last 12 years from 52% to 39%. This reduction might even be the result of the Slovenian Heart Foundation activities.

The Foundation has acquired the status of an institution of national importance, which is also confirmed by the Ministry of Health.

An important project carried out by Slovenian Heart Foundation is entitled "Protects health". This project involves the conferring of the "Protects health" label to suitable food products - health protecting food.

Inadequate nutrition is among the most important factors a cause of coronary heart diseases. It is difficult to measure the effect of food as a single factor, since there are several negative factors involved. However, the mortality rate due to heart disease has slightly dropped, and the reason greatly lies in improved people's awareness on the well-balanced nutrition habits. The doctrine heart of preventing coronary disease is not only more pleasant for people, but also cheaper if we consider treatments which have to be undertaken after the outbreak of the disease. This task becomes one of the major importances in Slovenia.

People need to be educated and taught about correct nutrition. The percentage of obesity in people has to be reduced by improving the nutrition regimen and by an active recreation. According to 1997 survey data, obesity and overweight is observed in 43.3% of people ages 20 to 65. Overweight and obesity play a major part in coronary heart disease development.

*Brief description of the protects health project:*

Common emphases of nutritional recommendation include lower quantity of fats, saturated fatty acids, cholesterol, salt and sugar, which also means that energy value is lower or that more fiber containing products are consumed.

The "Protects health" label is conferred by the Slovenian Heart Foundation to those food products, which meet the standards set according to the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO, 1996). The compliance of food products is evaluated by an independent Commission with its office registered at the Institute of Hygiene, within the Medical Faculty in Ljubljana.

The Commission is composed of renowned experts in the field of healthcare and nutrition. All declared food products should be safe for human consumption and should have an adequate declaration and all the analyses performed in accordance with the regulations.

The project is efficiently designed from all aspects and follows the targets of the Healthcare Plan of Slovenia, therefore the Ministry of Health has granted it its official support (1994). It further contributes to the promotion of health and may be included among the objectives of the World Health Organization, called Health for Everybody by the Year 2000.

### ***Results***

The success of the project or of the trademark "Protects health" greatly depends on media presentation. The Slovenian Heart Foundation has carried

out the presentation through the Journal For the Heart and through the articles published in newspapers, as well as through radio and TV spots. Numerous lectures dealing with health protecting food products and healthy nutrition have been organized. Great interest, on this topic is noticed in the schools. Together with food manufacturers the presentations of health protecting food products, including exhibitions and food tasting at fairs and social events, has been organized by our group annually.

Various branches of Slovenian Food Industries (meat industry, bakeries and dairies) responded promptly after the initiation of Slovenian Heart Foundation in the 1993, on the recommendation that suitable food products may be designated with relevant label. The acquisition of the "Protects health" label has a powerful marketing effect. There are already 150 health protecting food products available now, the majority, i.e. 20% of them being dairy products. The dairy products are evaluated according to fats, saturated fatty acids and cholesterol content and energy value. For the time being, the following products produced by Slovenian dairies: are skimmed milk, fermented milk products and drinks and cottage cheese made of skimmed milk.

From this year on the health-protecting label can also be conferred to products imported from abroad and sold in Slovenian market.

Dairy products are indispensable in our nutrition, as they comprise the main nutritive substances: proteins, calcium, vitamins B1, A, D and fats. Since fats are saturated, milk and dairy products made of skimmed milk should be chosen at first place. Some dairy products contain 0.1% lactic acids, which is relevant to fat-free products, cholesterol and saturated acids free.

All health protecting food products are controlled on daily basis by taking the samples at random from shops and are submitted for analysis by authorized laboratories. In the recent years the inscriptions on the declarations of dairy products have been updated to contain data on the product, required according to the Slovenian regulations. These product are, among rare foods, more precisely labeled as before: content of fats, proteins, carbohydrates, energy value. Consequently, we have decided that dairy products need no longer to be controlled, from this point of view especially as some of these parameters are already controlled during the production by relevant inspections.

### ***Conclusions***

It seems that the cooperation between manufacturers of health protecting food products and the Slovenian Heart Foundation is running successfully, since the number of food products with the "Protects health" label increases and they are recognized and trusted by more than 40% of Slovenian adults. The project is being implemented in curricula of many elementary schools. From our experience and from the results of questionnaires, the label of health protecting

food is a good guide in choosing alimentary products for all those who are familiar with this label. Most people dislike obtaining data by reading declarations, as they are often printed in tiny letters, or are deficient.

The last questionnaire carried out in October 1999 has shown that 63% of people, familiar with the health protecting label, often decide to purchase this kind of products, 33% regularly buy health protecting food products and only 4% pays no attention to the label. This result is a good stimulation for us to keep spreading the health protecting food label and stressing the importance of healthy food, which this label stands for.

## **MLIJEKO I MLIJEČNI PROIZVODI KAO HRANA SA ZDRAVSTVENIM ZAŠTITNIM UČINKOM**

### **Sažetak**

*Slovenska fondacija srca dodjeljuje zaštitni znak "Štiti zdravlje" koji ima karakteristične naljepnice oblika srca ispod kojeg se nalazi natpis "Štiti zdravlje" kao i povoljna svojstva proizvoda (opis proizvoda).*

*Zaštitni znak se dodjeljuje odgovarajućim prehrambenim proizvodima - zaštitna hrana i odgovarajućim jelovnicima u restoranima - zaštitni jelovnici. Među najvažnijim rizičnim čimbenicima u nastajanju civilizacijskih bolesti, gdje dominiraju bolesti srca i krvnih žila, bez sumnje pripada i nezdrava prehrana. Međutim uvijek postoji mogućnost edukacije ljudi o tome kako odabrati zdravu hranu i stimulirati prehrambenu industriju da proizvodi više zdrave hrane - zaštitne hrane. Dodjela zaštitnog znaka može postati dobar putokaz u tom smislu.*

*Među mliječnim proizvodima može se naći veliki broj onih s zaštitnom funkcijom. To su mlijeko i mliječni proizvodi dobiveni od obranog mlijeka. Kao i drugi prehrambeni proizvodi i oni moraju udovoljavati zahtjevima propisanim smjernicama svjetske zdravstvene organizacije. Ti zahtjevi uključuju sljedeće parametre: količinu masnoće, zasićenost masnih kiselina, kolesterol, sol, šećer, vlakna, energetska vrijednost. Zdravstveno ispravni mliječni proizvodi određuju se na osnovi niskog udjela masnoće, zasićenih masnih kiselina, kolesterola i niske energetske vrijednosti. Nezavisna komisija određuje pogodnost prehrambenog proizvoda za dodjelom prava na korištenje zaštitnog znaka "Štiti zdravlje".*

*Ključne riječi: mlijeko, mliječni proizvodi, zdravstveno-zaštitni učinak*

### **References**

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