

Consultation Report

regarding a possible cooperation agreement with the Choices International Foundation and its logo criteria

Summary

On behalf of the Swiss Society for Nutrition



SGE Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Ernährung
SSN Société Suisse de Nutrition
SSN Società Svizzera di Nutrizione

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Summary

On 13 January 2010, the Swiss Society for Nutrition (SGE) invited important stakeholders, potential licensees¹ and other interested parties to comment, by 31 March 2010, on a possible cooperation agreement with the Choices International Foundation and its criteria.

A total of 62 comments were submitted, 53 percent of which came from economic actors, and 47 percent from others. Three additional statements were submitted from foreign and international organisations – those were analysed separately, since the consultation refers to the Swiss market.

Overall, 70 percent of respondents (40 actors) view the possible introduction of a “Healthy Choice Logo”² into the Swiss food market negatively or rather negatively. This finding was heavily influenced by the statements from the economic actors, 84 percent of which (26 actors) responded unfavourably or rather unfavourably.³ From amongst the remaining actors, 54 percent (14 actors) responded unfavourably or rather unfavourably. Four out of six prevention and health organisations responded favourably or rather favourably, as did three out of four universities, polytechnics and research institutions, and two out of three individuals. One consumer association responded unfavourably, three others did not respond at all.

Of the potential „Healthy Choice Logo“ licensees, 19 percent (three actors) could envisage identifying suitable foods and/or beverages from their product lines with a “Healthy Choice Logo”, whereas the majority (75 percent, or 12 actors) could not.

Overall, 67 percent of respondents (37 actors) view a possible cooperation agreement with the Choices International Foundation negatively or rather negatively. Again the statements from the economic actors, 87 percent of which (26 actors) responded unfavourably or rather unfavourably, carried significant weight. From amongst the remaining actors, 44 percent (11 actors) responded unfavourably or rather unfavourably. Five out of six prevention and health organisations responded favourably or rather favourably, as did two out of three individuals.

The World Health Organization (WHO) postulates in its “Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health” that accurate, standardised and comprehensible information on the contents of food items is necessary in order to make healthy choices. The fundamental goal to satisfy this postulate and use nutrition labelling as a means to simplify the choice of – and access to – a balanced diet should, therefore, be pursued further. The findings of this consultation, however, indicate that the introduction of a “Healthy Choice Logo” into the Swiss food market is unlikely to be successful at the present time, especially given the lack of support from food producers. Thus, the consumer information strategy of the Federal Office of Public Health needs to be reassessed.

¹ The term “licensees” refers to users of a “Healthy Choice Logo”. The term is intended in the general sense and makes no claims regarding any financing models.

² A “Healthy Choice Logo” is a logo that identifies healthier alternatives within defined product categories and which is placed “front-of-pack”.

³ It should be noted that the Federation of Swiss Food Industries (fial) as well as seven companies emphasise that they oppose only the state-controlled introduction of a “Healthy Choice Logo”, not the use of a “Healthy Choice Logo” per se.