

Abstract

Newtools—Developing New Tools for a Sustainable Food System, Including Two Scoring Systems for Foods on Nutritional Quality and for Environmental and Social Sustainability [†]

Marianne Hope Abel ^{1,*} , Kaja Lund-Iversen ¹, Hanne Fjerdingsby Olsen ², Helle Margrete Meltzer ¹ , Marianne Morseth ³, Trond Arild Ydersbond ⁴ and Knut Inge Klepp ¹

¹ Norwegian Institute of Public Health, 0213 Oslo, Norway; kaja.lund-iversen@fhi.no (K.L.-I.); hellemargrete.meltzer@fhi.no (H.M.M.); knut-inge.klepp@fhi.no (K.I.K.)

² Department of Animal and Aquacultural Sciences, Faculty of Biosciences, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, 1432 Ås, Norway; hanne.fjerdingsby@nmbu.no

³ Department of Nursing and Health Promotion, Faculty of Health Sciences, Oslo Metropolitan University, 0130 Oslo, Norway; mmorseth@oslomet.no

⁴ Statistics Norway, 0131 Oslo, Norway; trond.arild.ydersbond@ssb.no

* Correspondence: mariannehope.abel@fhi.no

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Abstract: Background and objectives: Today, enough food is produced in the world, but much of the food produced and offered has poor nutritional quality, is unevenly distributed, or requires a lot of natural resources. To achieve a more sustainable food system, there is a need for simple tools to guide consumers, food producers, politicians, etc. towards more sustainable foods and diets. The main aim of the NewTools project is to develop two new scoring systems for foods; one that indicates nutritional quality, and one that indicates environmental and social sustainability, and to explore potential areas of application. Methods: In the research project NewTools (2021–25), 28 different actors in the Norwegian food system are partners and represent research institutions (7), food industry (13), governmental agencies (3), and non-governmental organizations (5). Building on existing knowledge and scoring systems, the project will first work to identify relevant indicators for being included in the scores. Indicators should be evidence based, measurable, and reasonably easily accessible. The indicators shall then be weighted according to their relative importance into the aggregated scores. NewTools also facilitates co-creation so that possible uses for the scores can be identified and tested. Research integrity is ensured by following a predefined framework for cooperation. Results: Until now, the evaluation of the newly revised Nutri-Score in a Norwegian setting has revealed several potential areas of improvement. We have defined a set of criteria for a nutrition quality score that will better align with food-based dietary guidelines, and a prioritized list of gaps compared to the Nutri-Score. For environmental and social sustainability, we are currently mapping relevant indicators with input from the literature and food system actors. Discussion: NewTools is a research project and a platform for broad collaboration that can contribute to the development of effective tools for shifting the food system towards a more sustainable direction, including more dimensions of sustainability compared to the European “product environmental footprint” (PEF). Partners representing governmental agencies, the food industry, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) contribute information, critical perspectives, data, and feedback, and their involvement is important to ensure that different perspectives are included.

Keywords: nutrient profiling; sustainability; scoring systems for foods

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