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FOPL "NUTRISCORE" system is misleading the consumers

An important intervention from the Exporters' Association of Crete (E.A.C)

Harmonization of "Front-of-Pack-Labeling" (or FOPL) systems, which is promoted by WHO and the "farm to fork" strategy of European Commission, is aiming to help consumers to make healthier food choices. Among the existing FOPL systems, NUTRISCORE seems to gain ground throughout food producing companies, consumers' organizations and European retailers, mainly due to its simplicity.

Nutri-Score is a food evaluation and categorization system developed in France and started to be implemented in 2017. Nutri-Score goal is to evaluate the nutritional value of food products and classified them into five categories, where the category "A" (green) is said to be the healthiest, while on the other hand the category "E" (red) is the one with the lowest nutritional value.



The algorithm of NUTRISCORE evaluates only a part of each nutritional profile and only the following elements: energy value, total fats, saturated fats, sugar, salt, protein and the amount of fiber. It DOES NOT consider the overall quality of each food product or ingredient (natural or chemical), neither the recommended daily consumption or the possible presence of healthy ingredients like vitamins, Bio-phenol's, antioxidants, monounsaturated fats, probiotics etc. The result is, that instead of presenting valuable information to the consumer for a healthier diet, NUTRISCORE directs them away from the totally natural or single-ingredient products in favor of the processed food (which can be easily adjust their recipes for achieve a higher score in the algorithm, but not necessarily for become healthier).

A great example of the above misleading classification, is the Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO), a single-ingredient and natural product with scientifically proven health value and a basic ingredient of the world-recognized Mediterranean diet, which is classified in category "C", while other processed foods and soft drinks, appear as healthier and in a higher category (B or even A).

Given the fact that European Commission is willing to choose one sole FOPL as mandatory, in 2022, if Nutri – Score will be selected under its current form and algorithm, the consequences will be catastrophic for both consumers; health and producers' economy.

Extra Virgin Olive Oil, as a totally natural and single-ingredient product with proven health benefits, deserves nothing lower than the highest category on any FOPL system that will be selected («A" for Nutri–Score, a proposal that is in line with the International Oil Council), which is not only our request (Exporters' Association of Crete), but also from all the main organizations of Crete, as listed at the end of this document. Apart from Extra Virgin Olive Oil, our request is extended for all natural or single-ingredient products (honey etc), or else we propose to be excluded for any FOPL system. Our request was submitted also during the "Call for proposals" for a revision of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 according to Farm to Fork Strategy (COM 2020)", in January 2021.

EAC intensifies its actions mainly in two directions: The reliable information of the involved bodies and organizations inside and outside our country, regarding the problems arising from the implementation of the Nutri - Score system, but also the submission of proposals for the modification of the evaluation criteria of this system and the more objective categorization of the food products.

This letter has the support of the "Region of Crete and is co-signed by the following associations and authorities

- Chamber of Commerce of Heraklion
- Chamber of Commerce of Rethimnon
- Chamber of Commerce of Lasithi
- Chamber of Commerce of Chania
- Association of olive oil bottlers of Crete
- Association of olive millers oh Heraklion
- Association of olive millers of Chania
- Hellenic Mediterranean University, Department of Nutrition & Dietetics

For the Exporters Association of Crete

The President

Kalabokis Alkiviadis

The Vice-President

Karpadakis Emmanouil

www.crete-exporters.com, +30 2810 343458, info@crete-exporters.com