

Vienna, 19th November, 00.01

## TIME FOR ACTION: WHOLE GRAIN IS FUNDAMENTAL IN THE CREATION OF A HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEM

Today, the Whole Grain Initiative (a partnership of leading experts and organisations dedicated to promoting whole grain), renewed its call on governments to recognise the role of whole grain in creating healthy, sustainable, and resilient food systems by promoting whole grains in dietary guidance and health campaigns.

Globally, 1 in 5 deaths is associated with a poor diet<sup>i</sup>. Eighty-eight percent of countries are encumbered by malnutrition and diet-related non-communicable diseases<sup>ii</sup>. Despite the numerous health benefits associated with whole grain, research shows consumption of whole grain remains concerningly low. Globally, it is estimated that we are eating less than a quarter of recommended intake of whole grain per day<sup>iii</sup>.

Recent research from the World Wildlife fund suggests that moving to a “planetary diet” (a balanced diet with lots of whole grains, fruit and vegetables and less sugar, oils, fats and meat<sup>iv</sup>) can reduce wildlife loss by up to 46%, halt deforestation and reduce food agriculture-based greenhouse gas emissions by at least 30%<sup>v</sup>.

The Whole Grain Initiative, with the support of its 50 member organisations, is asking governments to bring in policy measures which will help public understanding of the benefits and consumption of whole grain. The three proposed measures are:

### **Consistent dietary guidelines emphasising whole grains**

Worldwide, more than 100 countries have developed, or are currently developing, food-based dietary guidelines. Greater focus on whole grains is needed in both the guidelines and the supporting images or food guides.

### **Clear front-of-pack labels recognising contribution of whole grain**

Front-of-pack labels have been proven to be effective tools to help consumers identify healthier food products<sup>vi</sup> and have been recommended by the WHO as a tool to help prevent non-communicable diseases<sup>vii</sup>. More and more countries are adopting front-of-pack labels to help consumers understand what they’re eating. Supportive of this move, the WGI is calling for more governments to consider implementing front-of-pack labelling which includes whole grain in the algorithms.

### **Education and marketing campaigns on the benefits of whole grain**

A whole grain campaign run by the Danish Whole Grain Partnership in collaboration with the Danish government and other non-profit health organisations increased average whole grain intake from 32g to 82g/10mJ/day post campaign.

Patrizia Fracassi, Senior Nutrition and Food Systems Officer from the FAO added, “It is important we act on this quickly. Whole grain has been shown to have a host of health benefits as well as being better for the planet. Consuming more than 50g of whole grains per day is associated with a reduction in the risk of mortality by up to 24% <sup>viii</sup>. However less than 50% of the world’s population meet this target<sup>ix</sup>. To address this concern, we recommend comprehensive food-based dietary guidelines and clear labelling to promote the consumption of whole grain”.

Michaela Pichler from the Whole Grain Initiative said, “The Whole Grain Initiative brings together experts from around the world that share the same passion - to increase the global consumption of whole grain. Our work – such as a recently published global consensus on the definition of whole grain and the pending definition of whole grain foods – helps governments develop effective policies to increase whole grain consumption in their countries.”.

All of these ideas will be discussed in more detail as part of the WGI’s global virtual meeting being held on International Whole Grain Day (19<sup>th</sup> November). The event will serve as an incubator for exchanging inspiring whole grain best practice. It will bring together renowned academics and policy specialists to discuss the real-life application of initiatives and policies to build healthy, sustainable and resilient food systems. The event will end with an open Q&A session.

- ENDS -

### **Notes to editors:**

#### [About the Whole Grain Initiative](#)

The Whole Grain Initiative brings together key stakeholders from around the world, including Whole Grains Council, Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council Australia, EUFIC (The European Food Information Council), EPHA (European Public Health Alliance), European Cancer Leagues, Malaysia Nutrition Society, Health Grain Forum and many other NGOs, academics and associations.

On 19th November 2020, they will be hosting a global virtual meeting entitled “Building Healthy, Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems.” Speakers will include:

- Michaela Pichler, Secretary General, International Association for Cereal Science and Technology
- Patrizia Fracassi, Senior Nutrition and Food Systems Officer, FAO
- Kelly Toups, Director of Nutrition, Oldways, Whole Grain Council
- Roberto Volpe, MD, PhD researcher at the National Research Council of Italy and Italian Society for Cardiovascular Prevention (SPIREC), Representative at the European Heart Network (EHN)
- Gitte Laub Hansen, Project Manager, Danish Cancer Society WholEUGrain
- Sara Grafenauer, General Manager, Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council
- Chris Seal, Emeritus Professor, University of Newcastle

The event will run from 15h30 – 17h00 CET. You can register for the event [here](#). The webinar will be recorded and all speakers will be available for media interviews.

Europe:

Michaela Pichler

[michaela.pichler@icc.or.at](mailto:michaela.pichler@icc.or.at)

[www.wholegraininitiative.org](http://www.wholegraininitiative.org)

USA:

Abby Clement

[aclement@oldwayspt.org](mailto:aclement@oldwayspt.org)

---

<sup>i</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)30041-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)30041-8/fulltext)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.fao.org/nutrition/education/food-dietary-guidelines/background/en/>

<sup>iii</sup> [https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2019-04/tl-tlg040219.php](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-04/tl-tlg040219.php) (29g average intake per day, compared with 125g recommended per day)

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/eating-for-our-planet>

<sup>v</sup> WWF (2020). Bending the Curve: The Restorative Power of Planet-Based Diets. Loken, B. et al. WWF, Gland, Switzerland

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6723811/>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6723811/>

<sup>viii</sup> Afshin, A., Sur, P. J., Fay, K. A., Cornaby, L., Ferrara, G., Salama, J. S., Abebe, Z. (2019). Health effects of dietary risks in 195 countries, 1990–2017: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017. *The Lancet*, 393(10184), 1958–1972

<sup>ix</sup> Global Dietary Database. (2020). Dietary data by country. Retrieved from

<https://www.globaldietarydatabase.org/our-data/data-visualizations/dietary-data-country>