



Factsheet - Consumption of whole grains

The [Whole Grain Initiative](#) (WGI), a global collaboration of research, health, and industry professionals, advocates for the importance of consuming whole grains based on the growing scientific consensus of their multiple health benefits. WGI urges the EU to ensure harmonised food policies for healthier and sustainable diets within resilient food systems, which incorporate whole grain as one of their positive components.

1. Suboptimal diets are the leading cause of death and major contributors to the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) globally. NCDs, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancers, account for nearly 90% of deaths and 85% of years lived with disability in the WHO European Region [1]. Among various dietary risks, **a low intake of whole grains has been identified as the second most significant contributor to the global burden of disease in most regions of the world (Figure 1), and the first when considering the number of years lost due to disability or premature death [2].**
2. Research shows a daily consumption of 50g of whole grains, is associated with a reduction in the incidence of type 2 diabetes by approximately 25%, a 20% reduced risk of cardiovascular mortality, 12% reduction in cancer mortality and total mortality by approximately 15% [3]. Although the 2023 Nordic Nutrition Recommendations advise to consume at least 90g of whole grains per day [4], even the **lower intake of 50g is not reached in 16 of 27 EU Member States**, as estimated by the Global Dietary Database [5]. Accordingly, **encouraging a relatively minor increase in whole grain intake could lead to substantial economic benefits**, reducing healthcare expenses and minimising lost productivity [6].
3. The Whole Grain Initiative has made significant progress in driving harmonised policy by developing and publishing global consensus definitions for whole grain as both a food ingredient and a food product [7]. According to the WGI consensus, a whole grain food should contain at least 50% whole grain ingredients based on dry weight. Foods containing 25–50% whole grain ingredients based on dry weight may make a front-of-pack claim regarding the presence of whole grains but cannot be designated as ‘whole grain’ in the product name. These definitions provide a vital foundation for advancing whole grain consumption.
4. While the European Commission acknowledges the importance of whole grains as a food group [8] **and the European Food Safety Authority emphasises whole grains, in its guidance for harmonised front-of-pack nutrition labelling [9]**, most of the existing labelling algorithms, such as Nutri-Score, assign positive points to fibre while overlooking the content of whole grains, despite whole grains bringing both a combination of fibre and other beneficial compounds. Furthermore, Nutri-Score includes food groups like fruits, vegetables, and nuts but fails to consider whole grains as a distinct food group.
5. Whole grains, are **high in nutrients**, including dietary fibre, vitamins, and minerals, as well as beneficial bioactive compounds (Figure 2) [10][11]. This nutritional richness is due to the **retention of the bran, germ, and endosperm from the grain kernel**. However, refining whole grains, significantly reduces these valuable nutrients and bioactives [12]. Increased whole grain consumption is included in the dietary recommendations of many countries around the world and largely promoted by health organisations and the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems [13].

Endorsing a legal definition, intake guidelines, and clear labelling indicators for whole grain products is essential to facilitate their incorporation into daily diets [14]. By fostering further positive dialogues, such as the Danish Public-Private Partnership on Whole Grain [15], we can inspire individuals to embrace whole grains as a vital and enriching component of their daily diets.

Figure 1 (adapted from [2])

A diet low in whole grains is the second greatest risk factor in diet-related mortality rates (just after a diet high in sodium).

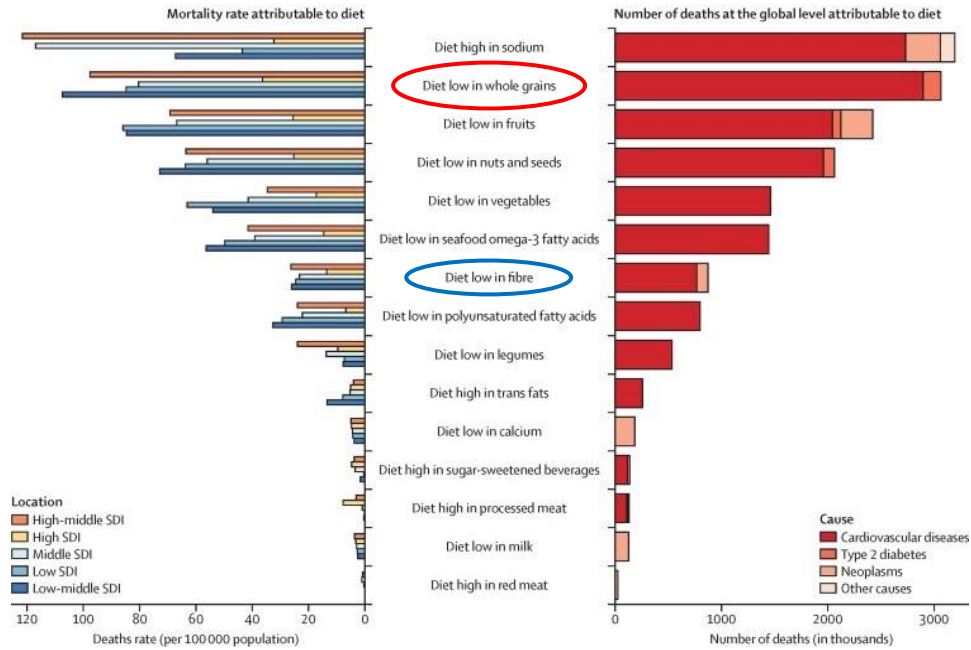
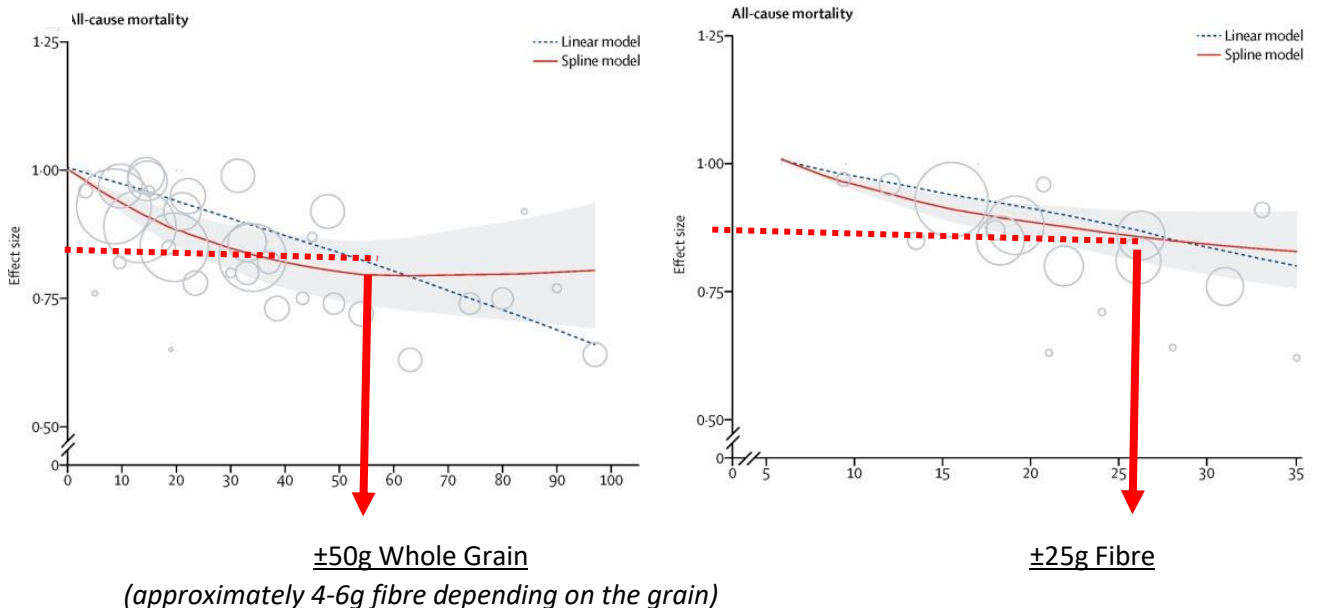


Figure 2 (adapted from [10])

50g whole grain consumption brings various nutrients, fibre, and an equivalent mortality reduction to intake of 25g of fibre.

Associated with 15% risk reduction in all-cause mortality, consume either:



References

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About us:

The Whole Grain Initiative aims to raise awareness regarding the benefits of increased whole grain consumption. The Initiative brings together key stakeholders from around the world, including Whole Grains Council, Grains & Legumes 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, scientists, manufacturers, and associations.