

BfR endorses complete deletion of diabetic foods in the legislation on dietetic foods

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Dietetic foods are foodstuffs intended to satisfy particular nutritional requirements. The German legislation on dietetic foods (*Verordnung über diätetische Lebensmittel*) defines which regulations these foods are subject to. In Germany, the current discussion focuses on the removal of the regulation for specific dietetic foods for diabetics and to replace the obligation to label carbohydrate exchanges with a uniform European nutrition labelling on packaged foods.

BfR has already stated in several opinions that in terms of nutritional physiology, diabetic foods which, for example, advertise with a low glycaemic index, are unnecessary. In addition, the Institute is working on recommendations for standardised nutrition labelling. In light of recent discussion, the present BfR opinion assesses whether the aspired alterations are contrary to the special dietary needs of individuals with a glucose metabolism disorder. Specifically in its opinion on the Jenkins study (BfR, 2009)¹, BfR already looked into the current study results from 2008-2009. In the present opinion, the Institute assesses the international study results from 2002-2007.

BfR again concludes that a diet with a low glycaemic index does not necessitate any special dietary requirements for diabetics since the vast amount of study results lead to different conclusions. This result corresponds to the draft of an EFSA opinion published just recently.

The concept of carbohydrate exchanges (BE or KE) is unique in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The concept is designed to portion carbohydrate-containing foods and to provide diabetics with guidance in choosing foods. Yet the concept offers no precisely defined values but rather provides estimated units that are applied differently in each country. Many European diabetes associations are thus asking for uniform and extended nutrition labelling on packaged foods.

BfR advocates the modifications that are planned for the German legislation on dietetic foods insofar that standardised and extended nutrition labelling on packaged foods, as currently discussed in the European Community, and the removal of a regulation on claims of special diabetic foods are realised.

The full version of the BfR Information in German is available on http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/208/bfr_befuerwortet_ersatzlose_streichung_von_diabetikerlebensmitteln_in_der_diaetverordnung.pdf

¹ BfR 2009: Jenkins study does not refute BfR statement on the needlessness of diabetic foods, BfR Opinion Nr. 040/2009, 19 February 2009, http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/245/jenkins_study_does_not_refute_bfr_statement_on_the_needlessness_of_diabetic_foods.pdf