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European Commission
Directorate-General Health and Consumer Protection
Unit C4 – Health Determinants

Kgs. Lyngby, 15 March 2006

Consultation response to Green Paper

Det Danske Haveselskab hereby submits its response to the consultation on the European Commission's Green Paper, "Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases".

Det Danske Haveselskab ("Danish Garden Society") is an interest organisation whose 52 000 members are mostly over 50 years of age.

The most important communication channel to the members of the society is the magazine HAVEN (11 issues per year and 360 000 readers). The society also has a website: www.HAVEN.dk.

Gardening against overweight – "Garden exercise"

Overweight/obesity among middle-aged and older Danes is a major source of illness and loss of quality of life. To many people, the idea of beginning to exercise in a fitness centre or undertaking a similar regimen is a daunting proposition. Therefore, Det Danske Haveselskab proposes to highlight the garden as a place where people can exercise and change their lifestyles in an agreeable manner. The reasons for this are:

- your garden is right outside your door, which makes it easy to get started whenever you want
- it is easy to adapt your level of activity to the time at your disposal and to your individual strength
- garden activities are pursued outdoors during daylight and in fresh air, thereby also counteracting depression
- besides exercise, gardening has a lot of associated benefits, such as the joy of growing plants, perhaps vegetables, watching bird and insect life, etc.
- the target population is large since many Danes over 50 live in a house with a garden, which means that a considerable number of people may benefit from initiatives in this field
- the gardening experience may be savoured individually as well as shared with others
- many people over 50 years of age are interested in gardening.

There is a lack of scientific evidence for the claim that gardening can counteract overweight and a lack of measurements showing how much energy is consumed by various garden activities.

Finally, there is a need to spread this message and make "garden exercise" an exciting new field of activity for people over 50.

Yours sincerely,

Else Mikkelsen
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