



European
Commission

THE SWEDISH FOOD BASKET

STOCKHOLM

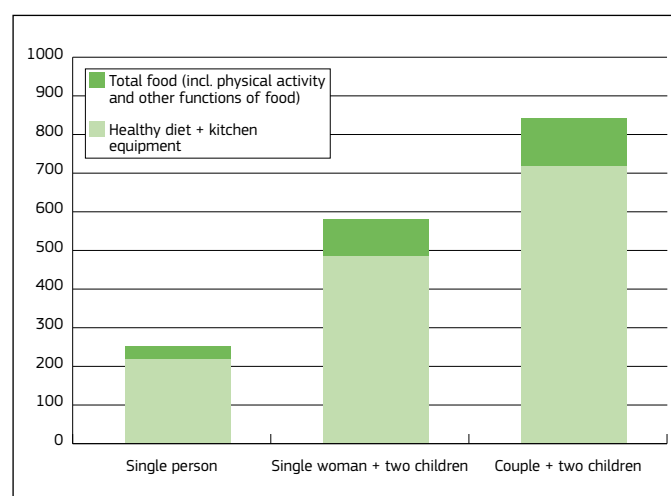
➔ The European Reference Budgets Network is a project financed by the European Commission that aims to develop cross-national, comparable reference budgets in all EU Member States. Reference budgets are baskets of goods and services considered necessary for an individual household to achieve an acceptable standard of living within a given country, region or city. Preparing reference budgets with a common methodology can help EU Member States to design effective and adequate income support measures and to encourage mutual learning and the exchange of best practices. More information about the project as well as the full country reports can be found on the European Commission website: <http://europa.eu/!CC79TD>

The Swedish food basket indicates the monthly budget required for an adequate food intake by three reference households (consisting of children and people of working age, in good health, without disabilities and living in the capital city). The basket includes a budget for food and for the kitchen equipment required to prepare, serve, consume and preserve this food. Furthermore, it takes into account the necessary budget for physical activity

other functions of food, such as its social function for example. The food basket has been developed in accordance with nutritionist recommendations and national dietary guidelines and takes into account the cultural specificities of Swedish eating habits. The feasibility and acceptability of the basket have been verified through focus group discussions involving citizens with different socio-economic backgrounds.

1. Key findings

The Swedish Food Budget: monthly amounts in euros ⁽¹⁾, Stockholm, March 2015



The monthly budget required for a healthy diet in Sweden is **EUR 215 for a single person** and **EUR 715 for a family of two adults and two children**. If the budget needed for the

other functions of food (eating out, holidays, etc.) is taken into consideration, the **total monthly food budget** amounts to **EUR 249 for a single person** and **EUR 841 for a family of two adults and two children**.

2. National specificities

Developing cross-national, comparable European reference budgets requires the differences between the respective budgets of the Member States to be explained according to the institutional, cultural, climatological and economic context of the country concerned. The Swedish food basket takes the following factors into account:

➔ Dietary habits

The latest survey on the dietary habits of the Swedes was conducted in 2010-2011 by the Swedish National Food Agency. About 1800 people aged 18 to 80 reported their food intake during four days, and answered a general questionnaire about their dietary habits. The main conclusions highlighted that Swedish

⁽¹⁾ EUR 1 EUR = 9.3 SEK

people tend to consume too much saturated fat and sugar, and have too high an intake of salt. On the other hand, they do not eat enough fruits and vegetables and whole grain products. Generally speaking, women have better dietary habits than men, and youngsters between 18-30 years old have the worst dietary habits. Furthermore, the survey revealed an improvement of eating habits in Sweden compared to previous years. Nevertheless, some factors need further improvement, such as a reduction of the intake of sugar, salt and saturated fat.

➔ National food guidelines

The exact composition of the healthy food basket has been developed in accordance with the national food guidelines. The Swedish National Food Agency is mandated by the Swedish Government to establish nutrition guidelines. Those recommendations are set in close collaboration with other Nordic countries, which share similar dietary habits and diet-related issues, and are based on the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations. They aim to recommend a food intake that is optimal from a physiological perspective and reduces the risks of food-related diseases. Moreover, the Nordic countries have agreed on a joint label for healthier food products: "Keyhole". Labelled products contain less fat, sugar and salt and more fibre. In addition to the guidelines, the National Food agency also uses the Food Circle to inform consumers about the various elements of a healthy diet. It consists of seven recommended food groups: vegetables; fruits and berries; fat; potatoes and root crops; milk and cheese; bread, cereals, rice and pasta; meat, fish and eggs. The exact required amount of the food groups in the food basket is also based on dietary guidelines published by the Stockholm City Council Centre of Epidemiology and Social Medicine.

➔ The pricing of the basket

The pricing of the food basket was conducted in March 2015. The selection of the shop was based on the assumption that the reference family should have a certain degree of freedom in the choice of store. Discounters were excluded, since they do not sell all the types of products required for the weekly menu. All the prices were collected in Stockholm, from a medium-sized

supermarket of the leading retailer in Sweden. This retail chain can be found throughout the country and stores are easily accessible by public transportation.

➔ Institutional context

The pricing of the basket for households with children also takes into account the fact that all pupils in primary schools receive a free school lunch, prepared according to the Swedish dietary guidelines. Children attend school about 36 weeks per year. Hence, they eat lunch free of charge at school about two-thirds of the year. This represents a reduction in the cost of the healthy food basket for couples and single parents with two children by 6 % and 9 % respectively per month.

➔ Physical activity

Besides the budget required for a healthy diet, the food basket also includes a minimum budget for physical activity, as this is presented in the national guidelines as a general requirement for a healthy lifestyle. The Swedish Public Health Agency recommends at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week for adults, for example by performing moderate sporting activity 30 minutes five days per week. Children should undertake at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. Adults are assumed to reach their level of recommended activity by walking, and school curricula include sufficient sporting activities for children. Therefore, no additional costs for physical activity are included in the Swedish Food Basket.

➔ Other functions of food

The food basket also incorporates cultural, emotional and social functions of food that have been identified as necessary for an adequate participation in Swedish society. Eating out once in a while, inviting friends over, spending time with children and relatives, and cooking special meals for important celebrations and family holidays are seen as constitutive functions of food. The focus group participants also highlighted the comforting and relaxing functions of food as a way to relax after a stressful day at work.