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## **Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption among kindergarten children**

*Developing taste awareness using the Sapere method*

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## INCREASING FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION AMONG KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN - DEVELOPING TASTE AWARENESS USING THE SAPERE METHOD

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**Objectives:** The objective of the study was to test the Sapere-method as a method to develop taste awareness for fruits and vegetables among kindergarten aged children. The study aimed at linking consumption of F&V to knowledge and awareness of different senses such as taste and texture. It was also intended to increase the children's courage to taste new types of F&V and consumption of F&V by putting taste into words through food exposure.

**Methodology:** Results from the baseline study in the Periscope project on habitual dietary intake among 360 children, aged 3-6 years, in 14 different kindergartens showed limited variation in F&V intake. The Sapere-method was developed further and refined based on prior studies among 11-12 year old Swedish school children. A five day taste workshop in a selected kindergarten was developed and 12 children and two pedagogues participated. The workshop activities included specific tastings, sense-games and baking and the children were encouraged to share and talk

about the different taste experiences, the children were supported to taste the disliked F&V again.

**Results:** The children responded positively to the taste workshop. The children's uncertainty of the connection between food and the singularly tastings in the beginning of the study were turned into awareness of different tastes in the food. Unfamiliar food were connected with familiar food through specific recognized tastes and thereby slowly accepted. Taste experiences were spontaneously put into words and shared among the children during the meals.

**Conclusion:** The study suggests that by strengthening kindergarten pedagogues' knowledge of the Sapere method, it is possible to increase children's awareness of senses related to food, physically and verbally. The study suggests that this can be a way to reduce food neophobia and increase food courage. However controlled studies among kindergarten aged children are needed to verify the findings.

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## PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF NGOS - THE EXAMPLE OF COORDINATED ADVOCACY EFFORT IN ESTABLISHING A FREE SCHOOL FRUIT PROGRAM

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**Objective:** To provide an example of how coordinated NGO advocacy can influence public health policy development.

**Methods:** The current national action plan on diet (2007-2011) consists of more than 100 measures. One of these measures is to establish a school fruit program that reaches all pupils in primary and secondary school, in order to reduce social inequalities caused by differences in diet among school aged children. Free serving of fruit to all school children is proven to be socio-economically cost-effective. To be realised, this measure needs considerable financial resources allocated in the national budget. Concerted advocacy efforts seem required to get it realised. Five major Norwegian health NGOs established in 2004 the coalition Kostforum in order to collaborate on policy issues related to diet and public health in general, and on the school fruit program in particular. The main strategies to influence policy development are meetings with politicians, media sensitization and increased public awareness through internet and new

social media.

**Results:** Media monitoring show that the members of Kostforum have contributed to a number of articles in media. Kostforum and the member organisations have had several meetings with politicians. Several organisations communicate the same message alone or together in a range of deliveries to the political system. A Facebook Page has recently been published to build support among pupils, parents and the public in general.

**Conclusion:** NGOs can play a major role in pushing public health policy forward using several strategies. Coordinated advocacy efforts and communication of one main message through many channels may be crucial to influence the political system to implement effective public health measures. However, if we have succeeded in contributing to the realisation of a universal free school fruit program is yet unknown.