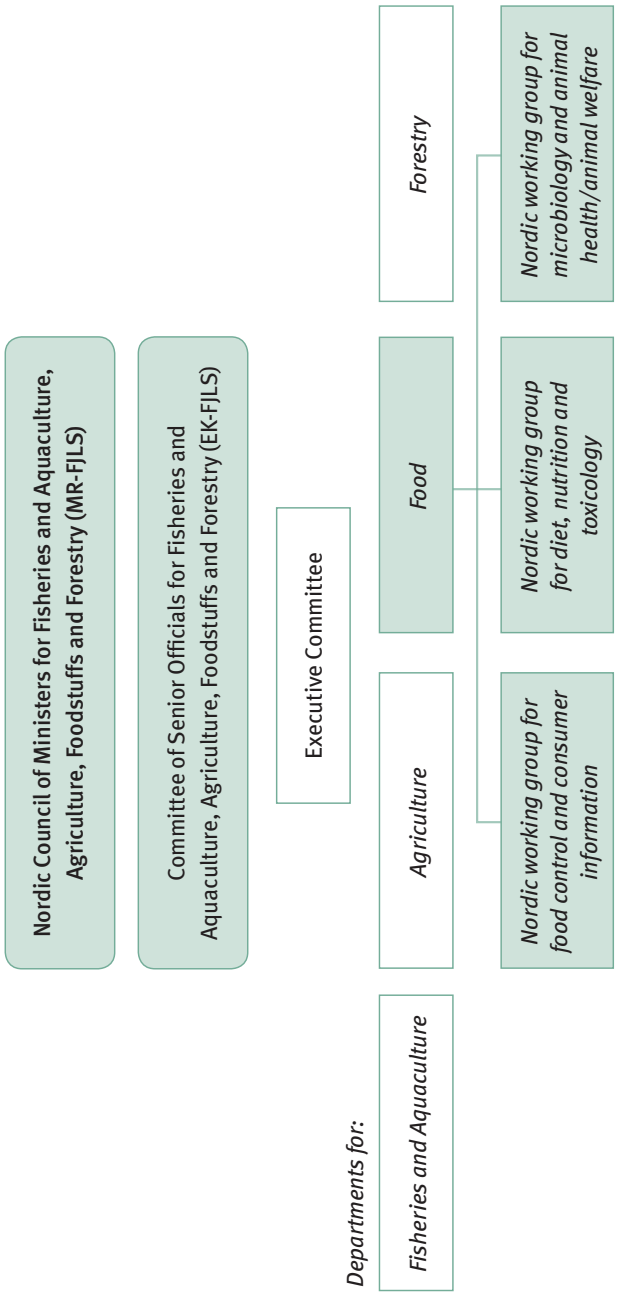




The political line for co-operation in the food area is established by the Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry. In addition to the joint Nordic Committee of Senior Officials which works within the entire area, four separate departments have been set up. One of these has responsibility for the food area.

You can find more information about food co-operation here:
www.norden.org/livs or by phone: +45 3396 0200

Diet, food and toxicology (NKMT)

This working group is responsible for Nordic activities within diet and nutrition, food culture and quality as well as risk evaluation linked to chemistry and toxicology. The group attaches importance to the fact that projects which have been started are relevant from both a nutritional and a toxicological angle.

The group’s activities are therefore a natural extension of the strategy goal for sustainable development in the Nordic Region, which emphasises the importance of maintaining both safety for the individual foodstuff and the total diet, and that these two elements should be seen to be connected. For example, the risk of the consumption of caffeine is assessed, the results of which should initiate further work within the EU to establish an acceptable daily consumption of caffeine.

A better life through diet and exercise

The food sector, in co-operation with the social security and health sector, has drawn up a Nordic Action Plan for better health and quality of life through diet and physical activity. The action plan should be seen in the light of the disturbing development where more Nordic citizens are becoming overweight and leading an unhealthy lifestyle.

The action plan is supported by the individual Nordic countries’ efforts to promote healthy food habits and physical activity, and focuses attention on measures which create further Nordic synergy in relation to the efforts which have already been put in place nationally. The action plan should also be seen as a common Nordic input to the international debate on the struggle against obesity.

The action plan sets up a number of common objectives for the Nordic countries in the development of dietary and lifestyle habits in the population as well as the incidence of overweight and social inequality in health in the years to come. At the same time there are proposals for a number of joint initiatives, for example, in the form of shared monitoring to follow the development.

The action plan describes too, that the Nordic measures should be prioritised with focus on improving the conditions for children and young people to make healthy choices, to make the healthy choice easier for the population in general, and to direct initiatives towards especially vulnerable groups. In line with this, projects have been started, for example, concerning common Nordic criteria for nutritional labelling, the development of a catalogue in which all the best Nordic projects to promote good health are collected, as well as exchange of information regarding information campaigns.

Nordic-Baltic co-operation

In addition to the common Nordic co-operation there is focus on increased co-operation with the Nordic countries’ neighbours, especially the Baltic States. A Nordic-Baltic ministerial meeting is organised every three years and an annual meeting at senior official level. The food sector also has two working groups working on issues concerning public health and food safety, as well as animal health/welfare.

Co-operation on healthy and safe food in the Nordic countries

Nordic co-operation on food helps Nordic citizens have confidence in and access to good, healthy food.

Nordic co-operation on food concentrates on four focus areas

- protecting consumers against health risks through good food safety
- increasing efforts for animal health and welfare
- promoting good labelling, marketing and tracing of foodstuffs
- encouraging healthier eating habits and lifestyle

The purpose of the co-operation is to jointly take advantage of specialist expertise and administrative resources as well as to promote Nordic influence on international development in the food sector.

The work of the food sector is based on focusing on important political areas, promoting co-operation between industry, consumers and the authorities, using resources in a few areas of priority, and building up, utilising and disseminating knowledge.

The food sector has three permanent working groups. Each group consists of 10–12 authorities or experts, who meet twice a year in different places in the Nordic countries. They exchange useful information on the latest news in the food area. There are also discussions on international questions, new proposals and ideas as well as debates on current food topics, which have been prepared for the specific meeting.



© DMA. Photo: Lars Ranek

Food control and consumer information (NMF)

This group is responsible for activities within legislation, inspection and control, labelling and consumer information. Through its work, the group will contribute to effectiveness and harmonisation in the work of the Nordic authorities. The land/sea to table perspective is the guiding principle for the group’s work.

One of the topics for a project under this working group is the withdrawal of illegal products from a market. The Nordic control authorities are proposing to draw up a common understanding and perhaps guidelines following a hearing in the industry. Another example is a common Nordic inspection campaign on the topic of misleading labelling.

An annual Nordic inspection conference

Everyone who follows the debate on the control of our foodstuffs knows that this is not an easy task to solve. It is therefore even more important that experiences are shared across the Nordic countries. An inspection conference is held every year with a defined topic, which can, for example, be everyday life and tools of the trade for food controllers. The objective of the conference is to maintain and strengthen the Nordic network for inspection staff and to provide competency development for staff. It is also the intention to involve the industry.



© Eksportutvalget for fisk. Photo: Per Alfssen



Photo: PhotoDisc

The committee of senior officials grants money every year to the working groups which can be used for projects. These projects can cover a variety of different subjects from small expert seminars to surveys lasting several years. Reports are written on some of these projects and these are available on the Nordic Council of Ministers’ website (www.norden.org/publikationer).

The groups take an active part in each of their working areas in order to influence Nordic co-operation within research and development and to contribute to follow-up on the agreed information and communication strategies.

In addition, the working groups are responsible for following up on international development in their respective area and making proposals which strengthen and further develop the Nordic approach within the EU/EEA, WHO, FAO and Codex Alimentarius.



Photo: PhotoDisc

Microbiology and Animal health/welfare (NMDD)

The area of responsibility for this working group covers activities within microbiology, microbiological risk evaluation, zoonoses as well as health and welfare for production animals, including farmed fish.

Veterinary contingency planning

The Nordic countries have a long tradition of wiping out and preventing the incidence of serious infectious diseases in animals. There is therefore a desire, through strengthened Nordic veterinary contingency work, to ensure that the Nordic Region continues to maintain a good status in relation to serious infectious animal diseases and zoonoses.

The Nordic ministers have adopted a strategy plan for Nordic veterinary contingency co-operation. The plan includes, in the first instance, a number of strategies and initiatives, linked to communication, professional updating and mutual exchange of experience. This involves, amongst other things, a warning system similar to the one in effect internationally.

The co-operation also means focusing on common veterinary contingency exercises, in which the Baltic States can also be involved. These diseases often do not recognise borders between different countries.