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## The request for advice

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On 5 June 2007 the President of the Health Council of the Netherlands received the following request for advice on logos that promote healthy food choices from the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport:

In the battle against obesity and the prevention of chronic diseases it is important to help people to make healthy choices about eating. The food industry must also be stimulated to make their products healthier. It was with this in mind that my predecessor called in early 2005 for a simple, positive and voluntary logo that would encourage people throughout the Netherlands to make healthier eating and drinking choices. There are now three initiatives that aim to help Dutch consumers to make healthier choices: the *Energy* logo, the Healthy Choice Clover and the Choices stamp.

In May 2006 three food producers presented the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport with the Choices stamp and an underlying system. During the presentation my predecessor expressed support for the initiative in principle and indicated a wish to receive advice from your Council on the criteria that have been applied.

The Choices stamp organisation is supported by a committee of independent experts (including the Netherlands Nutrition Centre) which has in recent months evaluated and further developed the underlying framework and the criteria for the logo. It has also taken into account the current dietary guidelines. The organisation has indicated that it now proposes to start working with the new criteria. This therefore strikes me as a good moment to seek your advice on these criteria.

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As mentioned above, there are other logos on the market that promote healthy food choices, such as the Albert Heijn *Healthy Choice Clover* and the Dutch food industry's *Energy* logo. I would request that you also include those logos in your advisory report.

The Regulation on Nutrition and Health Claims Made on Foods has been in force since 1 July 2007. This stipulates that products may only bear a claim if they conform to a specific profile (which has yet to be formulated). Your advisory report may assist in the discussion of these profiles.

#### Request for advice

With reference to section 4.12 of your Council's Work Programme 2007, and further to discussions that have been conducted with your Secretariat at departmental level, I would request that you prepare an advisory report on logos that promote healthy food choices. In this report I would ask you to provide a scientific opinion on:

- the criteria applied (also in relation to product categories),
- the interpretation of the logos by the consumer,
- the effectiveness of logos in promoting healthy consumer choices,
- the extent to which logos encourage the food industry to develop healthier products.

I look forward to receiving your advisory report later this year.

The Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport,  
(signed) Dr. A. Klink