

MVTU  
Univ og Bygningsstyrelsen  
Att: Jacob Fuchs

Dok. 76072/rk

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### **Evaluation of DNF /The National Food Forum)**

Thank you for the opportunity to express our views about the merit of the DNF. The views expressed below are based on the experiences of the Danish Consumer Councils two representatives (Ulla Marie Mortensen and Rasmus Kjeldahl) during the meetings since the start of DNF. We have participated in most meetings with either one both representatives. Rasmus Kjeldahl was also involved in the process leading up to the creation of DNF in 2006 and is currently member of several advisory bodies related to foodscience and universities

First we would like to express our satisfaction with the choice of Chairman for this difficult task. Leo Larsen has done an excellent job in relation to starting up DNF and identifying meaningful issues to deal with.

We think that a positive impact of DNF is to provide the Ministry with information about the development of the involved universities following the reform and the concerns of some of the other organizations represented in DNF.

Despite this and the much appreciated efforts by the chairman we continue, nevertheless, to be unsure about the wisdom of the 2006 reform and the value added of the DNF. It remains a fundamental problem that DNF have no real decision power over the participating universities and we also remains very much in doubt about it efficiency in relation to ensure real coordination. Typically the universities are rather reluctant to put issues on the agenda or to submit themselves to any kind of coordination form DNF. This is unsurprising given the independent status of universities following the reform. In fact we have the impression that certain initiatives are actually deliberately kept away from DNF to avoid that competing universities gets an advantage from gaining insight.

If we look at the task description for DNF we find that only a limited number of task has actually addressed to any significant extent, and even when addressed it is unclear if this have had any real effects. It seems to us that most time have been spend on

- Recruitment of students and the destiny of these students during and after studies

- Discussions on the relationship between the authorities and the former sector research institutes now part of the universities.
- Organization of the yearly debate meeting
- Issues related to EU research programs

These issues –not least those related to education - are certainly very important but so are many of the other issues on the task list that have not been dealt with. In our field of interest we note the quasi-absence of discussions related to consumer needs, such as the Universities new role in relation to advising the authorities in the field of nutrition, food safety and risk assessment and management. We are ready to recognize an own responsibility for not putting many such issues on the agenda – the reason is however that we do not really see what DNF should be able to do in relation to the university activity in that area. We remain for that reason in doubt about the merits of our participation in the forum as an organization and regrets that the reform in 2006 have excluded us from some fora where we used to have a more direct influence on the consumer relevant activities of the sectoral research institutions including National Food Institute and the National Veterinary Institute.

To conclude, we find that DNF has had a rather limited impact – and we are not surprised given its status and the distribution of competences among its members. We also believe that some of the positive effects of DNF may be more efficiently achieved through alternative coordinating mechanism. Finally we think that the reform have decreased real consumer involvements in key areas of interest and we would like to see this problem reflected in the recommendations of the evaluation panel.

Rasmus Kjeldahl

Ulla Maria Mortensen