

SPORTS FOODS

Bridging Science, Sport, and Policy

What are sports foods?

Sports foods are products specifically formulated for and marketed to sportspeople. They ensure an **appropriate supply of fluids, nutrients and/or substances** which help the body prepare for, maintain and **recover from high intense physical performance**.

Very intense physical performance is a peculiar condition of use which makes the reference population vulnerable to nutritional deficiencies or even injuries or prone to imbalances.

These foods are intended for:



Professional athletes



Amateur and recreational sportspeople



Anyone engaging in all types of intense exercise



38%

of Europeans practice intensive physical activity at least once a week.*

Sportspeople have unique nutritional needs

Sports and other **physical activities may push the body to extreme conditions**, and sportspeople and athletes have very specific nutritional needs. Proper **nutrition is critical** to prepare for, maintain and recover from high-level sporting performance. During intense muscular exercise, the body needs more nutrients than during periods of non-intense activity.

For example, sportspeople require **intense hydration** to replace sweat loss during exercise, as well as **higher energy intake** and **higher sodium intake** to compensate for losses and prevent the risk of dehydration. Additionally, they may need **higher amounts of protein** for muscle performance. According to the situation, sportspeople might need some specific substances, including certain **vitamins and minerals**.

Types of sports foods



Carbohydrate-rich energy food products

Products high in glycaemic carbohydrates which are essential before, during and after exercise for providing energy.



Carbohydrate-electrolyte solutions

Drinks providing electrolytes and carbohydrates as the major energy source which are effective in maintaining or restoring hydration status and in maintaining endurance and/or high-intensity performance.



Protein and protein components

High protein and essential amino acids products that help muscle maintenance/gain by ensuring a good synthesis of proteins.

The specificities of sports foods are **clearly indicated on the product labels**, and consumers are provided with adequate and **clear information about the intended use** of these products. They are also usually sold in a separate section of the store so that consumers are able to **clearly distinguish sports foods** from foods for general consumption.

* Special Eurobarometer SP525 : Sport and physical activity

The specificities of sport foods should be recognized

Sports foods are specifically formulated to meet the specific nutritional requirements needed to support physical performance (intense/ recreational) and recovery after exercise.

The **diversity of national rules** or interpretations is threatening the functioning of the EU single market, creates operational burdens and hinders innovation. It would also lead to consumers not having access to the same or equivalent products in all Member States. In 2016, the **European Commission recognised that the specificities of these foods may need to be taken into account** in the application and implementation of current horizontal EU rules.

To date, **no such measures have been taken**.

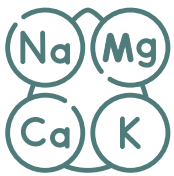
Need for appropriate EU regulatory framework

In order to ensure a meaningful, harmonised regulatory framework that promotes an efficient and safe use of sports foods, **SNE asks for a clear definition of the category**. It is essential that a specific definition for sports foods is established at European level in order to distinguish these products - which have been scientifically designed to meet the specific nutritional needs of sports people- from general food products.

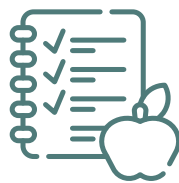
SNE suggests the following definition:

“Sport food” means food specifically designed, formulated and marketed in relation to physical activity, physical performance and/or post-exercise recovery.

SNE believes that sport foods need to:



Contain nutrients at different levels to those established for normal foods



Use nutrition claims that are not allowed for normal foods but are appropriate for sports foods



Communicate on the intended use of sports foods in order to adequately inform consumers and ensure the correct use of these products



Label the nutritional composition in a way that is relevant for the intended use of sports foods

Commitment to anti-doping prevention



In 2021, the first-ever **European wide standard to prevent the presence of doping substances** in sports nutrition and food supplements was published*.

In the absence of specific European regulations, the **voluntary standard** describes several processes as Good Manufacturing Practices that companies applying the standard shall put in place to reduce the risk of the presence of prohibited substances, banned by anti-doping regulations and organisations, such as the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

SNE members support the development and promotion of specific standards of quality for sports foods, which will encourage Member States to contribute to the international fight against doping and increase consumer protection.

* EN 17444:2021 - Doping prevention in sport - Good development and manufacturing practices aimed at preventing the presence of prohibited substances in food intended for sportspeople and food supplements