

# From Europe, with grain

Bread has been seeing a return among consumers' favorites lately. The main obstacles in the way of further market growth still come from the way it is perceived. To educate consumers, a multi-national, targeted campaign addressed the source of the problem. And it works.



**+** Bread's staple role among foodstuffs in Europe remains undeterred. Its image with consumers has received considerable help from communication campaigns, such as those organized by the Dutch and the Belgian bakery sector. The purpose: raising awareness among consumers regarding bread's nutritional and health benefits, its authenticity value and unique characteristics in terms of sustainability, quality, taste, diversity and traditions. This follows the first bread campaign, which saw good results in tackling the issue of decades-long declining bread sales. "Secondly, we learned that, besides quantitative goals, we need to work more on qualitative goals such as awareness," says Linda van Zonsbeek, Specialist in Nutrition & Health at the Dutch Bakery Center (NBC).

## Bread deserves attention

The associations in both countries recently worked together on a new campaign, called 'Bread good story. With grain from Europe' is the second round of a two-year-long campaign promoting the qualities of bread. It officially started in January 2022, with the first messages being sent out to consumer from September. It is presented as an integral part of a health-conscious lifestyle – nutritious, contributing to the daily protein intake, plant-based, locally produced and suitable throughout the day – through PR, special events, communication for food professionals that would help them promote bread, educational materials for schools, messages displayed in shops and online, as well as via TV announcements, social media messages and YouTube videos. The campaign's dedicated websites,

[www.brood.net](http://www.brood.net), [www.broodgoedverhaal.nl](http://www.broodgoedverhaal.nl) (the Netherlands) and [www.broodgoedverhaal.be](http://www.broodgoedverhaal.be) and [www.lepainunebellehistoire.be](http://www.lepainunebellehistoire.be) (Belgium), highlight the main focus points surrounding bread and its benefits: wholegrain, carbohydrates and fibers, protein, sports and weight management, gluten sensitivity and recipe ideas. Wholegrain bread is the hero of the campaign, starting with a necessary introduction to different types of flour and pointing out scientific-backed data that explains its lifelong benefits to health. The 'Success story – what makes it whole grain' message was promoted on TV and online. In November, two other videos were aired: 'Nonsense story, the facts on the table' and the 'Tall story, the superpowers of bread'. NBC and the Belgian Institute Bread & Health want to reach as many consumers as possible. In addition to consumer campaigns, the project also aims to get nutrition professionals involved. For the National School Breakfast, an event held in the second week of November, NBC also distributed educational material to primary school children – through schools in the Netherlands and through school magazines and special events in Belgium.

Even though wholegrain bread is the campaign's star, other varieties are also promoted. The information shared by the organizations covers bread in general, to get the full benefit of a deliciously diverse product segment.

To ensure the messages are effective for their intended audience, the campaign clearly distinguished its target groups to address each segment specifically. For instance, the story about protein in bread is focusing on active, sport-inclined consumers, whereas the health-conscious

(‘salad-eaters’) are enticed with the nutritional value of a sandwich with lettuce. The TV spot, which is conceived for a large spectrum of consumers, talks about the qualities of the whole grain (bran), with its fiber and micronutrient contents. Food professionals receive more in-depth information (why and how) and are provided with tools that they can use to inform their clients. Bakers and other stakeholders are informed about the campaign activities and what can be done to also inform their customers about bread.

The narratives were selected based on a SWOT analysis: “For example, health is an important buying motive, and whole grain is an important driver, but some people eat no or less bread because they think it will make them fat. With the different stories, we approach different people, from athletes and salad-eaters, with targeted reasons why bread is good for them, and give them information about the bread’s qualities,” illustrates van Zonsbeek.

The campaign utilizes the Touch-Tell-Sell, layered communication method, where each layer has a specific purpose and dedicated activities. The NBC details:

- + **Touch:** presenting bread in a positive way to consumers, food professionals and stakeholders and show why it is a good-for-you product. General-audience media is used for this layer.
- + **Tell:** informing the audience about bread’s good properties. For this layer, knowledge about bread is transferred to each target group, via both offline and online media.
- + **Sell:** convincing consumers that bread is a part of daily life, encouraging them to eat more bread, with activities making bread special, and with recipe ideas and various activities in bakeries and stores. An example of such an activity for this layer is the Week of Bread event.

Seven organizations from Belgium and the Netherlands collaborated in this organized effort to highlight what makes bread ‘a good story’: Nederlandse Vereniging voor de Bakkerij (NVB), Stichting Ambachtelijke Bakkerij (SAB), Vereniging van Nederlandse Fabrikanten van Bakkerijgrondstoffen (NEBAFA), Fédération des Grandes Boulangeries Belges asbl (FGBB), Koninklijke Vereniging der Belgische Maalders (KVBM-ARMB), Bakkers Vlaanderen and Institute Bread & Health. The NBC coordinates the project on their behalf.

### Week of Bread 2023

The ‘Bread good story’ campaign continues into 2023. It supports the Week of the Bread, which is organized from January 16 to 22 in the Netherlands and February 26 to March 5 in Belgium. On this occasion, wholegrain bread takes center stage: the promotional messages highlight its properties and its taste qualities, just in time for that year-start health focus. Activities for the event include publishing articles and recipes with wholegrain, social media posts, and outdoor advertising to raise awareness, inform and inspire people. Bakers can actively take part in the ‘Week of the Bread’ campaign, using materials available for

download on the project’s website. The campaign is based on the concept that a refreshed image of bread shows its important role in modern and healthy lifestyles. Emphasis is placed on storytelling, to connect with people and provide useful information about nutrition and health.

The goal is to have the total volume of bread sold in the Netherlands and Belgium combined grow to 1.34 million tons, said Frank Janssen, Manager at the NBC. “The campaign aims at supporting the consumption of wholegrain bread. The number of Dutch people who opt for wholegrain bread should rise to 53% in the Netherlands and to 35% in Belgium,” despite the current crisis, he anticipates.

### An EU-backed project

The joint sector organizations contribute EUR 435.000 per year for the campaign, which is 20% of its total value, with the EU co-financing 80%. The campaign skipped 2021, so the currently running coordinated efforts aims to consolidate the results of the one from two years ago and expand on its reach.

While both campaigns were standalone projects, the one currently running was based on data and learning from the first, as its organizers learned more about the most impactful types of activities. Among the important lessons learned from the first campaign, held in 2020, was that “a layered communication strategy is very effective in practice. TV is an efficient touchpoint. In addition, we can continue to reach a larger group of consumers by using the main touchpoints more often (television, social media, online video),” Janssen details. The data collected shows that similar issues and trends exist in both countries, with some differences (for example, different evolution levels of the same trend in each market). “That is also a reason that we focus in this campaign more on knowledge and awareness and not only volume,” van Zonsbeek emphasizes.

As the campaign advances, its organizers observe current market shifts. For example, working from home brought a boost to the artisanal channel, Janssen says, as it became more accessible, especially during times when many out-of-home channels were closed.

There are high expectations from the project: “Our vision is that, with good communication, we can make a stand against bread substitutes, which are often A-brands with high marketing budgets. Bread is a healthy and modern food and its story needs to be told. Especially now that social values such as health, sustainability and food safety are becoming more important purchasing motives, bread has an excellent proposition,” van Zonsbeek concludes.

The future of successful ‘bread stories’ will remain loyally close to the consumer. This means social values and the role they play in our diet, which will continue to impact consumption priorities. The focus is bound to belong to safety, health and sustainability - a yet untapped opportunity.

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