Recent Activities of IUNS in Salt Reduction and Food Security

The following two short reports outline the participation of IUNS in recent meetings as part of a wider program to reduce salt in the diet and to work with the International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFoST) in combining expertise in food and nutrition to promote sustainable food and nutrition security.

IUNS drives reduction of salt in diet to combat NCDs through its adhering body, the Nutrition Society of Sri Lanka (NSSL)

The summit entitled ‘Reducing Salt in Diet for Better Health and Combating NCDs’, organized by the Nutrition Society of Sri Lanka (NSSL) in coordination with IUNS and Unilever, was a great success. Seven years ago several workshops took place globally under the IUNS-Unilever program for reduction of salt, of which the proceedings were published and later several booklets were printed for wide circulation. Based on these workshops, the above salt summit was organized at Colombo in Sri Lanka by NSSL, the adhering body of IUNS, on April 25, 2016.

The conference had a very wide participation from the Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine; faculties from several academic and research and development institutions and the private sector, including small- and medium-scale industries. The program had three components: the launch of salt reduction with a message from the Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine of Sri Lanka; Dr. V. Prakash, Vice President of IUNS, then delivered a brief talk on ‘Nutrition Problems around the Globe Due to High Salt Consumption’; and finally three presentations on salt: 1) by Prof. Sudheera Kalupahana of the University of Peradeniya on ‘Scientific Perspectives on Salt and Health’; 2) by Mrs. Vasanthi Senaratne from the Consumers Forum Sri Lanka on ‘Challenges Faced by Consumers: A Special Focus on Reducing Salt from Diet’; and 3) Dr. Mary Kearney from the Global Nutrition and Health Program of Unilever, Vlaardingen, on ‘Consumer Challenges around Salt Reduction’; and also the Consumer Insights. The presentations were followed by a panel discussion on Reducing Salt in Food: Challenges and Possible Solutions, chaired by the NSSL President, Dr. Jaanaki Gooneratne, followed by a lively discussion by the audience. The plenary session to propose an action plan was led by the NSSL President and the IUNS Vice President, along with industry and consumer representatives. The ideas from the session were taken forward into an action plan.

Overall the focus of reducing salt intake in the diet was much below that recommended by WHO. It was emphasized that this focus was essential to combat NCDs. The salt intake in the Sri Lankan population is relatively high. The seminar provided a very important incentive to the Ministry with messages from IUNS, the NSSL, consumer organizations, and scientists that the overuse of salt in the diet has to be prevented through consumer awareness and by government regulations to reduce salt in processed foods.
This very successful summit provided an important impetus for salt reduction in Sri Lanka. It also emphasized the need for an active session on salt reduction during the next IUNS conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in October 2017 (IUNS-ICN 2017).

V. Prakash, Vice President of IUNS

IUFoST 2016 in Dublin, Ireland

The topic of the 18th World Congress of Food Science and Technology was ‘Greening the Global Food Supply Chain through Innovation in Food Science and Technology’. It began with a gala opening on August 21, 2016, at the Royal Dublin Society, Ballsbridge, Dublin, Ireland. This was followed by a series of scientific sessions and ended with an impressive closing ceremony during the afternoon of August 25, 2016. This annual congress of IUFoST was supported by the Institute of Food Science & Technology of Ireland (IFSTI) and the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI).

The congress had 8 tracks, namely: Innovation in Food Quality and Processing; Food Supply Chain and Distribution System; Future Foods; Food Sustainability; Societal Challenges in Nutrition and Health; Local and Global Food Safety and Security; Hot Topics in Food Science and the Food Industry; and Special Session. The 18th IUFoST World Congress included 5 keynote addresses, 80 scientific sessions, and more than 1,500 accepted abstracts, with 250 speakers in the scientific sessions, and more than 50 exhibition booths.

Of particular interest to IUNS and its adhering bodies was Session 4 entitled ‘IUNS and IUFoST Partnership: Addressing Global Food Insecurity Together’. The lead speaker was Professor Anna Lartey, President of IUNS, who spoke on nutritional insecurity as a key component in food security. She presented a global perspective, including several nations and population groups, and the role that nutrition needs to play by adopting relevant policies. This was followed by four talks on the following topics: Nutritional Security, a Key Note Component of Food Security; The IUFoST Cape Town and Budapest Declarations; The Double Burden of Malnutrition; and Health and Food Security. The final talk was delivered by Dr. V. Prakash, Vice President of IUNS. It focused on the relationship between food, nutrition, and health with respect to sustainable nutrition, affordable nutrition, and a food-based approach. This session was chaired by Dr. Mary Schmidl of the University of Minnesota, USA, and Dr. Delia Rodriguez Amaya of the University of Campinas, Brazil.

Other sessions which touched on nutrition were: Session No.50 entitled ‘Food Convergent Innovation: Reinventing Value Addition for Health of People, Planet and Economy’; Session 63 on ‘Food Fortification to Improve Nutrition’; and Session 68 on ‘From Infant to Golden Oldies – How Can We Optimize Muscle, Digestive and Immune Health?’.

World Food Congresses of IUFoST traditionally include an address by a distinguished individual who carries a message consistent with the theme of the congress. This lecture recognizes individuals who address IUFoST’s commitment to fight hunger and work for the improvement of food safety and food security worldwide. This year’s distinguished lecturer was Professor Mike Gibney. Professor Gibney has been a member of the academic staff at the University of Southampton, Trinity College Dublin, and University College Dublin. He is a former President of the Nutrition Society and a fellow of the IUNS. He has served on many high-level, international advisory committees in the EU, the FAO, and WHO. His research area is public health and personalized nutrition where he has published over 300 peer-reviewed papers. And he is the principal investigator in several, very large, EU-funded projects, most recently in the area of personalized nutrition.

The congress was well attended with over 1,600 delegates. It was announced that the next World Congress of IUFoST will be held in Mumbai, India, from August 27 to 31, 2018, with Dr. V. Prakash as Congress Chair.

Professor Anna Lartey, President of IUNS, also had discussions with some of the IUFoST leaders on how we could work together better in addressing the global food and nutrition situation, as two sister organizations of the International Council of Scientific Unions.

Anna Lartey, President of IUNS
V. Prakash, Vice President of IUNS