

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS AND DEFINITIONS

C. Leitzmann and U. Oltersdorf

Whenever experts representing different disciplines of natural and social sciences assemble to discuss detailed aspects of a complex subject such as nutrition, misunderstandings are likely to arise with regard to specific terms. This is especially true if, in addition to the various disciplines, the experts speak different national languages, as in case of this EURO-NUT Workshop with scientists speaking 9 different languages (Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Swedish). For this reason some of the usual difficulties concerning scientific definitions are exacerbated.

It may be helpful, for the participants of the Workshop and other readers, to define the key terms associated with the topic of the Workshop. An attempt was made to get a general consensus on the written definitions; this proved to be difficult. What resulted from editing these comments are the definitions of selected key terms included in this paper. It is hoped that this wider circulation of these preliminary definitions will stimulate further refinements, and clarifications of the terms; the results could be published in a later report. It is important to reach agreement, throughout Europe, on relevant definitions, if possible. A previous attempt at definitions in this area was included in report No. 1 of the EURO-NUT series.

Since English serves as the basis of communication, all definitions are stated in this language. It should be pointed out that some terms found in certain languages have no equivalent in the English language; this may also be true in the opposite direction. Other terms have several definitions, depending on the context of their use, or have different meanings in different languages. These complexities, and the fact that every language (including that of science) is a dynamic and not a static system, are problems inherent in any attempt to find acceptable common European definitions of certain terms.

Further the term "nutrition behaviour" is rather new, at least if current dictionaries are consulted. General dictionaries and even dictionaries of nutrition - including new ones - rarely list the term. The fact that the term nutrition behaviour has not gained wide popularity should be considered as a chance to stimulate the editors of dictionaries to include precise definitions in future editions. The absence of the term "food behaviour" is also an indication of its relatively minor importance in the past in nutritional, social and behavioural sciences. The term "food behaviour" is an expression formed of two nouns, as is very common in the German language. In contrast the English language has a preference for adjectival phrases. Thus dietary, nutritional, ingestive and certainly eating and drinking behaviour are all recognised terms

and may need to be considered in this connection.

Finally it has to be realized that there are usually distinct disparities between the phenomenon referred to by a defined term and the methods of assessing (measuring or indexing) that phenomenon. The assessment usually only partly reflects reality and causes problems of validity in measurement of food-oriented behaviour; this will be considered in this Workshop, and has already been addressed in EURO-NUT reports No. 1 and 2.

The following list is not claimed to be exhaustive, but includes the terms most often used and confused.

Food

Anything that, when taken into the body, serves to nourish, build and repair tissues, supply energy, or regulate body processes. Aside from its nutritional function, food is valued for its palatability and satiety effect as well as the varied meanings attached to it (emotional, social, religious etc.) by different individuals, groups, or races.

Nutrition

Deals with the physiologic needs of the body in terms of specific nutrients, the ways and means of supplying these nutrients through adequate diets, and the effects of failure to meet nutrient needs. In addition, nutrition is also concerned with the social, economic, cultural and psychological implications of food and eating.

Behaviour

All functional or informational dynamic relationships between an individual and the internal or external environment, whether as a cause or as an effect of activities. Behaviour is a combination of planned, spontaneous or habitual/customary actions and involuntary acquired or reflexive reactions. Human behaviour includes the use of, and is perleated by, language.

Nutritional behaviour (nutritive behaviour, food-oriented behaviour, eating and drinking behaviour)

All planned or spontaneous/habitual activities directed towards the procurement, preparation and consumption of food, including the social, symbolic and ritual uses of food.

Includes *Diets* (food consumption according to a regimen).

Special diets (food prescribed, regulated or restricted as to kind and amount, for therapeutic or other purposes).

Food habits (food customs, foodways, dietary practices)

Recurrent performances of food related behavioural sequences by which an individual or group selects, prepares or consumes food, directly or indirectly, as a part of cultural, social and religious practices.

Food consumption

Eating and drinking; digestion of food or drink; individual food intake; individual dietary consumption.

Not to be confused with household or national food consumption, which are aggregates of individual consumptions, including wastage.

Food pattern (dietary pattern)

Repeated arrangements of food and beverages that can be observed in food consumption records, including the combination of foods into meals or into recipes for prepared items in meals or snacks.

More loosely, types of foods consumed by people in a country, culture or locale emerges as a result of food habits.

Eating pattern (Eating practices)

There exists no consensus on a single meaning.

Includes: Combinations of foods eaten together (food patterns)

Variations in times and places of eating

Social functions of meals (including eating companions).

Food acceptance

The psychological process of selecting a food to ingest (or to purchase with the intention of ingesting).

Food attitude

Stable pattern of motivation (assembled within the individual by food-related experiences) producing predictable reactions and actions in the presence of recurrent releasing stimuli, and leading to observable food acceptance and (if repeated) to food habits.

Special types of food attitudes are food preferences, food cravings, food aversions and food avoidances.

Food preference

Personal motivation for selecting food items from an available supply. Specific preference for a certain food, beverage, recipe, dish or menu over others or over not ingesting at all. Degree of like-dislike for a food item, extent of preference for one item over other items.

Food craving

A food preference that is strong and reactive, to an extreme of obsession or compulsion.

Food aversion

Dislike, distaste or disgust (including psychologically based somatic reactions) for certain foods, dishes or menus as compared to others. The individual's refusal to eat the food item is the normal observable criterion, but acceptance with negative effect is also evidence of aversion.

Food avoidance

Food aversion to the point of consistent refusal.

Food intolerance

Mild or extreme symptoms of physical illness as a result of food ingestion. Mechanisms of food intolerance may include allergic, microbiological or toxic reactions to food constituents inside or outside the gut, or real psychosomatic reactions to dangers attributed to a food - or some interaction of physical intolerance and psychosomatic aversion.

Food knowledge

Objectively correct or incorrect information concerning food and the effects of food-related actions. The perceptual aspects of food attitudes and knowledge gained from conceptual learning through formal (e.g. schools) or informal (e.g. family; media) channels. Subtypes of knowledge are highly structured (e.g. norms) and rarely associatively structured. Accurate perception may be assessed from deliberate answers to direct questions or from what is revealed indirectly by verbal or behavioural responses to foods or eating situations.

Meal

The food and drink taken in substantial quantities, usually at a particular time of day, with a pattern culturally appropriate to that time and situation.

Includes: *Meal time*: Usual time of day for a meal

Meal preparation: Complex of food composition and surrounding situation

Meal occasion: Time and place of food intake.

Snack

Foods or beverages eaten under other circumstances than as a regular meal e.g. between meals; usually taken informally and in small amounts.

Dish

Food prepared for the table in a particular fashion or according to a specified cuisine.

Menu (diet, regimen)

The culturally specified range or variety of food consumed. The dishes or individual foods served at a meal, or the meal itself.

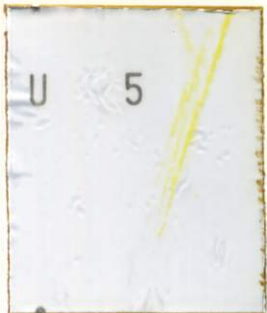
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report 7

**A concerted action project
on nutrition in the
European Community**

**Measurement and
determinants of food habits
and food preferences**

**Edited by
Joerg M. Diehl
and
Claus Leitzmann**



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report 6. The MONICA-project: Optional study on the surveillance of the dietary intake of the population with regard to cardiovascular diseases. Manual of operations, February 1985, ed. by Jan T. Knuiman, Pirjo Pietinen, Guy G. de Backer and Pierre Ducimetière.

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PROGRAMME OF THE WORKSHOP

Wednesday, 1 May 1985

- Arrival and registration
- 16.00 Words of welcome
by J.G.A.J. Hautvast, C. Leitzmann, J.M. Diehl
- 16.30 The study of food habits: objectives, methods and consequences
by A. Murcott
- 17.15 Food consumption surveys revisited: methodological aspects
by C. Scaccini

Thursday, 2 May 1985

- 09.00 Objective tests of preference amongst foods and drinks
by D.A. Booth
- 09.45 Causal influences within an individual's dieting thoughts and behaviour
by V.J. Lewis, D.A. Booth
- 11.00 Measurement and determinants of nutrition knowledge and behaviour of young people
by G. Reginster-Haneuse
- 11.45 Nutritional knowledge among various groups of young Greeks
by A.D. Trichopoulou, M.E. Tylianakis, K.M. Katsouyanni, A.J. Tzonou
- 14.30 Recent dietary trends in Belgium: socio-economic aspects
by Y. Lepage
- 15.15 Eating habits: possibilities and limits in a food consumption survey using the dietary history method
by L. Holm
- 16.30 Dietary habits in middle-aged men. Influence of cognitive ability and socio-economic factors in childhood
by L. Larsson
- 17.15 Food likes and dislikes and their correlates in French children
by C. Fischler