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IUNS Committee on Nutrition & Food Choice  
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Impact of changing food choice and habits on  
nutritional status in European countries

Brief paper from David Booth

EFFECTIVE DIETARY CHANGE  
UK and EU research projects funded or proposed

The need for efficacy research

A priority for this Committee is to facilitate research around the world into the determinants and consequences of food-choosing habits, so that we have sounder bases for socioeconomic and educational actions which are effective in enabling individuals to change their eating habits in ways that actually reduce their risk of disease.

The research that therefore is most needed identifies in ordinary people's terms (and hence for food-marketing), as well as in nutritional and food-production terms, those food-choice practices prevalent in some or many substantial groups of people which increase or decrease established disease-risk factors or self-diagnosable markers for those risks among such people. Such research results would strengthen both mass interventions and interventions with high-risk individuals but go beyond that medically based dichotomy to open up a social/behavioural science-based modality of culturally organised empowerment and support of individuals' healthier choices.

British research initiatives

The UK Government Department of Health is finalising a Call for Policy R & D proposals on two initiatives: (1) Individual health Behaviour; (2) Effective dietary change.

The UK Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food sets priorities each year for research contracts in Food Choice and in Food Risk Management, which include objectives in public health nutrition: the latest Call for Food Choice research included monitoring of individual fat intake, perceived benefits of health foods (e.g. multivitamins) and social influences on children's food choices.

Three of the Research Councils block-funded by the UK Government DTI Office of Science and Technology have a wide range of research priorities that include the social science, the psychology and/or the physiology and genetics of food choice as relevant to dietary health and/or energy balance (i.e. reduction of obesity and the metabolic disease syndrome).

Our own team has started two MAFF-funded projects on health-relevant dietary habits:

(a) The intake-reducing effects of ordinary foods via sensory cues to the postingestional actions of the various forms of

their lipid and other constituents, relevant to control of fat intake and body weight.

(b) The alterations in food choices and nutrient intakes that result from believing that oneself or one's child has a food allergy or other intolerance.

#### European Commission Research Framework

At least 3 programmes in the CEU's Fourth Framework have places for research into effective dietary change to promote health: FAIR (Agri-Industry), Biomed and Telematics. These provide an excellent opportunities, in which the IUNS Committee can play a role, to exchange methods and combine data from nationally funded research among countries in the European Union and to other nations such as in the former Soviet Union and less-developed countries on other continents, particularly Africa.

A proposal to combine physiological and social research into food choices within a fundamental and applied attack on ineffective weight control has been submitted to EC FAIR by partners in England, France, Italy, Germany, Greece and also Switzerland. This includes evaluation of computer-based consumer education in efficacious weight-controlling habits, which has potential for support to health systems from EC Telematics.

EC Biomed has it first Fourth Framework Call next Spring and this is likely to include research into prevention of cardiovascular disease.

As part of the extension of an EC AAIR project (Third Framework), our own team has started on a task of examining determinants of British consumers' fish-eating habits, particularly in connection with some species that are currently not widely available in the UK. Fish consumption in the UK is too low for health, especially of polyunsaturates-rich species. Some PUFA-rich fish are to be studied in this project.

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