

SATURATED FATS AS PART OF A HEALTHY DIET

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Brussels, 22 June 2009 - The importance of dairy fats as part of a healthy and balanced diet was confirmed by recent scientific insights presented at the AOCS Hot Topics session on Saturated Fats: Facts and Feelings (Orlando, US, 5 May 2009).

The role of saturated fatty acids among other macronutrients in the diet needs to be re-examined, according to the world-renowned speakers*. Recent studies show that in contradiction to the association between the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in the diet and the incidence of cardiovascular disease, reduction of fat intake and concomitant increase of carbohydrate intake among the US population has led to unexpected higher obesity and cardiovascular disease incidence.

Based on the latest scientific findings, the speakers stressed that with the increasing insight in all intricate interactions between fatty acids and health, there is no convincing evidence to make broad dietary recommendations on restricting saturated fats.

New scientific results also have identified specific actions of some saturated fatty acids that are beneficial for health. These results suggest that individual saturated fatty acids have very interesting physiological properties in the human body, such as myristic acid that can improve omega-3 biosynthesis with normal intakes. Therefore, saturated fatty acids should not be considered as one single group.

These conclusions are in line the outcomes of the previously held scientific symposium 'Scientific Update on Dairy Fats and Cardiovascular Disease'** which was facilitated by IDF. Both symposia concluded that the focus should be on a healthy and balanced diet. Given the contribution of dairy foods to nutrient intake within the population, recommendations to reduce dairy food consumption irrespective of the nature of the dairy product should be made with caution.

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Note to editors:

* The American Oil Chemists' Society (AOCS) Hot Topics Session on Saturated Fats: Facts and Feelings was held in Orlando (US), on 5 May 2009 during the AOCS Annual Meeting 2009.

The following world-renowned speakers presented:

- Dariush Mozaffarian, Harvard University, USA: *Is saturated fat consumption a major dietary risk factor for CHD - what is the evidence?*
- Jeff Volek, University of Connecticut, USA: *High Carbohydrate Versus High Saturated Fat Diets and Health: "You are not what you eat, but what your body does with it."*
- Peter Elwood, Cardiff University, UK: *The Impact of Dairy on Health.*
- Bruce German, UC-Davis, USA: *Does Current Scientific Data Warrant Aggressive Lowering of Saturated Fat in our Diets?*
- Philippe Legrand, Agrocampus-INRA, France: *The Role of Saturated Fatty Acids in our Body is Strongly Linked to their Chain Length. Each Saturated Fatty Acid has its own Merits.*

The presentations of the speakers of the hot topics session can be downloaded from http://www.aocs.org/meetings/annual_mtg/index.cfm?page=am09_ht_saturated.htm

** Over 50 internationally recognized experts in dietary fats and human health reviewed the available scientific evidence relating dairy products and milk fat to CVD risk at a Symposium on 'Scientific Update on Dairy Fats and Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)' hosted by the University of Reading (UK) and organized and facilitated by the International Dairy Federation.

The proceedings of this symposium confirming the important role of dairy for human health have been published as a supplement to the December issue of the Journal of the American College of Nutrition (JACN, Vol 27, No. 6, 720S-754S, 2008).

- The International Dairy Federation is the pre-eminent source of scientific and technical expertise for all stakeholders in the dairy chain.
- Growing IDF membership accounts for about **86%** of the world's total milk production.