

Food Facts Asia

CURRENT TOPICS IN FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION
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Consumers in Asia Remain Open-minded on Food Biotechnology

A recent survey in three Asian countries indicated that a majority of consumers in Asia recognise that their daily diet almost certainly contains biotechnology-derived foods and report they take no action to avoid them.

The survey, commissioned by the Asian Food Information Centre (AFIC), was conducted in several urban centres in China, Indonesia and the Philippines last year. The purpose of the survey, a follow-up to an earlier survey conducted in five South East Asian countries in 1999, was to gauge the knowledge and attitudes of Asian consumers to food biotechnology or genetically modified foods.

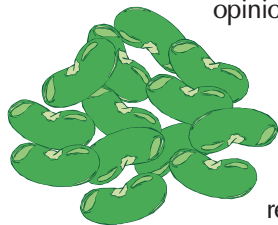
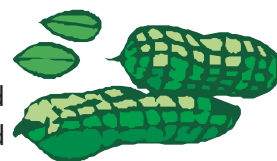
Says AFIC's Georgina Cairns, "Many of those who are passionate advocates 'for' or 'against' biotechnology foods are fond of quoting surveys of public opinion in Europe. Results of these surveys are sometimes used as a predictor of public opinion in Asia."

Cairns added that the 2002 survey "demonstrates that citizens of Asia remain open-minded

on this topic and wish to know more about the technology and how it might benefit them and their families in the future."

In March 2002, 600 street interviews were conducted in four cities; Metro Manila, Jakarta, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Survey questions focused on people's perceptions and concerns about food and nutrition. The 1999 survey had covered Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Consumers expressed high concern about the food they ate, with Indonesians being most concerned (99%), followed by the Chinese (95%) and the Filipinos (93%). When probed further on what these concerns were, respondents mentioned nutritional value, diseases that could be passed from animals to humans, microbial contamination and pesticide residues. These are real concerns that food safety agencies in the region have. Biotechnology-derived foods, however, were not one of the concerns volunteered.



New From AFIC

AFIC's original website went online in 1999. Since then, it has grown massively, both in terms of usage and the volume of information resources it contains.

To keep pace with ever-rising demand, and the increasing complexity of nutrition and food safety topics, www.afic.org has undergone a complete transformation.

To meet the needs of AFIC's professional users, who have little time to search and therefore quickly need concise, science-based facts, the new site features revised indexing and navigation systems, PDF and html options on AFIC's publications, plus a comprehensive direct contact link for enquiries, registration and publication request and feedback.

Popular features such as inclusion of the latest resources on the home page have been retained and



other sections such as the Press Centre for Journalists/Media have been enhanced.

Also check out the new Healthy Lifestyles Toolbox to find out if you are meeting healthy lifestyle targets.

As expected, knowledge and awareness about biotechnology and its applications were low. More than a third of respondents admitted to be "not at all aware" of terms like "biotechnology" and "genetic modification." Those who reported some awareness of biotechnology associated it with technological improvements made to foods.

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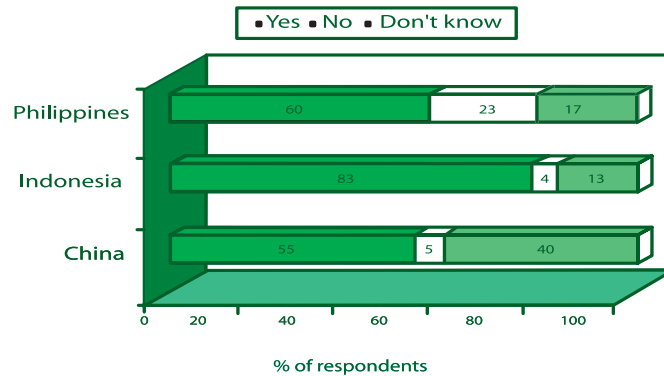
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Concomitant knowledge of the technology was also low. When respondents were asked if they had eaten DNA, only two out of five people gave the correct answer – “yes”. Only one in three recognised that the statement “Ordinary soybeans do not contain genes while genetically modified ones do” was false. Incidentally, consumers in more developed European and North American countries fare little better on these questions in similar surveys.

“Despite the sporadic and oftentimes sensational media attention on biotechnology and genetic modification, the results of the survey indicated that while the media had succeeded in creating awareness of the issue, it did little to improve understanding of the topic,” says Cairns. Respondents named high-profile examples like rice and tomatoes that had received substantial media focus as biotech foods – an expected result since respondents admitted that mass media, especially newspapers and television, were their most common source of information on biotechnology.

More than half of the respondents also believed that biotech foods were already part of their diet, though a small proportion (less than one in five) believed they were not. Furthermore, almost all respondents reported that they had not taken any action to avoid or seek out biotechnology derived foods.

Any Perceived Benefits from Biotechnology/GM foods in the next 5 years ?



Base : All respondents (600)

When asked if they would buy food that had been modified with biotechnology to improve nutrition, taste, freshness or to protect the environment, Asian consumers were overwhelmingly supportive. In all the questions, more than 80% of the respondents said they were “likely to buy” biotechnology food with these benefits. In addition, more than 80% of the respondents were willing to try snacks made with biotech ingredients.

This attitude is in sharp contrast with European consumers. In the European Commission’s Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2000, two thirds of Europeans said that they would not buy genetically modified fruit, even if it tasted better.

This openness seems to stem from Asian consumers’ perception that biotechnology would deliver benefits.

“Respondents were positive about the broad range of potential benefits that biotechnology-derived foods may offer to consumers,” says Cairns.

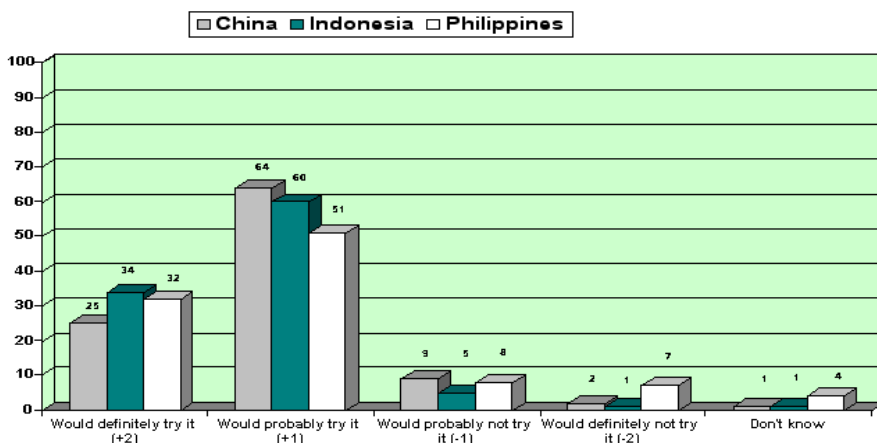
Respondents were able to cite almost four times as many advantages compared to disadvantages. Among these anticipated benefits were: improved nutrition, eating quality and shelf life. Nevertheless there were some who cited possible side-effects, ‘inaccessibility of the technology’ and ‘the addition of chemicals harmful to the body’ as possible disadvantages.

In all the countries surveyed, biotechnology labelling was not suggested as one of the items they would like to see on labels. Instead, consumers asked for labelling of expiry dates, ingredients and nutritional value, country of origin, and in Indonesia, *halal* (permitted foods according to Islamic dietary principles) labelling.

The survey’s labelling results differ from some conducted by interest groups in the region because it sought to define what people actually wanted to see on labels rather than prompting respondents on the issue of biotechnology labelling.

Generally the survey results were consistent with results of the earlier AFIC study. Asian consumers continue to show cautious optimism about the application

Would you try genetically modified corn snacks if offered now?



Base: All respondents (600)

of biotechnology to food and would like to receive more information.

Thailand's Dr Darunee Edwards, deputy director of the Centre for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering said, "Thai consumers are not really concerned whether products involved genetic modification or not, as long as they were safe, of good quality and not expensive."

Similarly in the Philippines, Dr Evelyn Mae Tecson-Mendoza, a research scientist at the Institute of Plant Breeding in the University of the Philippines, asserts that the government and scientists have made headway in convincing the public and the media on the benefits of biotechnology. A concerted effort by academia, the industry and government agencies have also been successful, she said, in better explaining issues of biotechnology to members of the public.

The results of the survey also corroborate well with an earlier, broad study conducted by Professor Thomas Hoban in North America, Europe and Asia in collaboration with Environics International Inc.

Generally Asian consumers mirror the optimism and acceptance of biotechnology reflected in North America. As Asian countries seek to feed themselves in more sustainable ways, biotechnology is a means that is increasingly compelling as health and nutritional benefits become more evident.

Says Prof Hoban, "Many Asian countries like China and India are actively pursuing biotechnology development and Asian leaders and scientists realise the need to speak up for themselves instead of relying on European paternalism."

However, the survey also drove home the sobering message that actual knowledge among consumers was still low and the mass media still has a very important role to play in ensuring accurate and science-based information is clearly delivered.

Dietary Supplements & Functional Foods > An Overview

Traditional medicine recognized the link between diet and health thousands of years ago. In some Asian countries, such as China and Japan, the belief that 'food and medicine come from the same source and serve the same purpose' has been established for many centuries. This link has taken center stage in recent years with the emergence of dietary supplements and functional foods. Further, advances in food technology and nutrition, consumer awareness and growing interest in medical self-care, increased health care costs of longer living populations, greater availability of high-quality products and in some countries a regulatory environment that is supportive of health claims that are based on genuine scientific evidence have fuelled rapid rises in the dietary supplement and functional food industries. Evidence of the health benefits of some foods and supplements is now well established but consumers should be aware that for many, there is little or no scientific evidence of health benefits. Being well-informed and exercising caution and moderation is therefore an important priority for those who wish to use such products.

Dietary Supplements

What are dietary supplements?

'A dietary supplement refers to any product (other than tobacco) that contains a vitamin, mineral, herb or other botanical, or amino acid (or a concentrate, metabolite, constituent, or combination thereof) and is intended as a supplement to the diet' - DSHEA of 1994 United States Public Law 103-417.

Mineral and /or vitamin dietary supplements may be especially important for individuals whose dietary intake is inadequate, women in their childbearing years, young children, adolescents, the elderly, vegetarians, those on a slimming programme and people who smoke or drink excessively. There is also much interest currently in supplements which are based on non-essential bioactive ingredients thought to offer specific health benefits. Dietary supplements come in many forms - including tablets, capsules, powders, soft-gels, gel-caps, and liquids. Though commonly associated with health food stores, dietary supplements are also sold in grocery, drug and discount chain stores, as well as through mail-order catalogs, TV programs, the Internet, and direct sales.

Supplement trends

Beyond treating deficiencies, evidence is emerging that some dietary supplements may help manage or prevent heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, and other chronic diseases; others are used in self-treatment or prevention of various lifestyle and health conditions or to extend quality of life. Targeting conditions such as joint health, gut remedies, blood fat, skeletal health, body fat, optimal vision, sleep problems, stress, depression, anxiety, breast and prostate health, and hormone imbalances, supplements today may include herbs, botanicals, animal and plant extracts. Chicken essence, garlic,

cordyceps, ginseng, tangkwei, linzhi, lycium, ginkgo biloba, black cohosh, echinacea, omega-3 fatty acids, evening primrose oil, capsaicin, lycopene, green tea extract, grape seed extract etc., are just some of the ingredients that have been used as the basis for supplements.

Supplement with a dose of caution

Evidence is certainly growing that some supplements may be beneficial, but for maximum efficacy and to prevent adverse reactions or toxicity, caution must be exercised when taking supplements. Firstly, it is important to read product labels, follow recommended dosages, heed all warnings and to consult a doctor or health professional, especially if taking any medications or undergoing treatment for a specific medical condition. Secondly, avoid taking too many supplements at a time, to prevent or reduce the risk of supplements interfering and interacting with one another.

Thirdly, it is important to remember that supplements should never be used as an alternative to healthy lifestyle and diet, which remain fundamental prerequisites for a healthy life. For example, some nutrients can only be found in foods or may only provide benefits if consumed in food form and cannot be replaced by supplements. Also, neither food nor supplement, can be regarded as substitutes for the benefits of physical activity. It is also important to remember that supplements may be used to protect against illnesses and aid recovery, but cannot cure diseases.



Functional foods trends

As ongoing research highlights the varied benefits of food components, many more functional foods have been discovered and many new foods have been developed in recent years. Cholesterol reduction, cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis are the most attractive targets for the development of functional foods, followed by child development, high blood pressure, diabetes, GI disorders, menopause and lactose intolerance. Calcium; soy protein; peptides and isoflavones; plant sterols and stanols; dietary fibre; vitamins B6, B-12, and folic acid; omega-3 fatty acids; conjugated linoleic acid and avocado oil; vitamin D; diacylglycerol; manitol; xylitol; oligosaccharides; garlic; polyphenols; anthocyanins; and coenzyme Q10 are some of the food components that have received considerable attention from food manufacturers.

Some foods products which first entered the market as functional foods may gain widespread acceptance, moving them from specialist health foods, to mainstream products. Margarine rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids are one example of this. Continued research and product development of margarine spreads, has resulted in further innovations, such as the introduction of esterified phytosterols and phytostanols, on the basis of extensive evidence that these compounds are effective in lowering blood-cholesterol levels.

Another large functional food area is that of dairy foods containing friendly or probiotic bacteria claimed to promote gut health, by balancing the intestinal flora, 'comforting' the GI tract, improving the GI condition and mineral absorption. Cereals and grains fortified with calcium, vitamin C, vitamin E or phytoestrogens are also gaining popularity. Drinks too, are a fast developing area of functional foods. In Japan fermented drinks and drinks with plant extracts, vitamins, sodium chloride, potassium chloride, calcium lactate, yeast, dietary fibre, or polyphenols are popular.

Functional foods

What are functional foods

There is no universally accepted definition of functional foods. The International Food Information Council (IFIC) defines functional foods as, 'foods that provide health benefits beyond basic nutrition'; in Japan which was the first national authority to establish a specific regulatory framework for functional foods, classed as 'Foods for Specific Health Use' (FOSHU), functional foods are defined as those containing 'effective substances in addition to providing basic nutrition and taste'.

Food items approved in Japan, as eligible to display the FOSHU label, must first demonstrate the presence of physiologically active components that are stable in food materials and have been proven using standard scientific procedures - including human trials, to be effective against specific diseases such as hypertension, allergy, raised blood-cholesterol levels. To date, over 200 food products have been approved as FOSHU.



Traditional foods believed to have intrinsic health benefits, such as omega-3 fatty acid-rich fish, like salmon and isoflavone-rich soy, both of which appear to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and some cancers, represent the simplest examples of functional foods. Foods fortified with nutrients or enhanced with phytochemicals or botanicals, as well as foods and beverages with added ingredients such as calcium in orange juice, also fall within the realm of functional foods.

Function foods-moderate the intake

Functional foods are convenient for today's lifestyle, genuinely-researched and offer novel ingredients that can bring about health benefits quicker. However, one must not rely solely on these foods for maintaining health. The American Dietetic Association (ADA) believes that functional foods, "have a potentially beneficial effect on health when consumed as part of a varied diet on a regular basis, at effective levels". Besides, excessive intake of certain beneficial foods can tip the balance of a healthy diet - hence a moderate intake is advisable.

Supplement & functional food regulations

As the dietary supplement and functional food industry grows, quality control has become an issue of utmost importance. In October, 2002, 340 representatives of Asian governments with members of the global supplement industry met at the IADSA Asian conference in Bangkok. A panel of regulatory experts from nine Asian countries identified the need for a common approach to regulations across the region and concluded that Codex Alimentarius may be the best route to a final agreement for the region. They also called for a marketing framework based on sound science, fair claims, product quality, safety and the widest freedom of choice for dietary supplements and functional foods. However, much needs to be done to facilitate the exchange of information, discussion and the establishment of common ground.

Brief outline of foods approved as FOSHU

Health Claim	Functional Factors	No. of Products Approved	Types of Products in the Market
Food that improve gastrointestinal conditions	Prebiotics Oligosaccharides Raffinose Lactulose Arabinose Probiotics Lactobacillus Bifidobacterium Dietary Fibres	336	Soft drink, yoghurt, biscuit, cookie, table sugar, tablet candy, pudding, soyabean curd, vinegar, chocolate, powdered soup, fermented milk, yoghurt, miso soup, cereal
Foods for those with high serum cholesterol	Soya protein and peptide Alginate Chitosan Sitosterol ester	28	Soft drink, meat ball, sausage, soya milk, soup, biscuit, margarine
Foods for those with high blood pressure	Peptides	42	Soft drink, soup, lactic acid bacterium drink, soyabean
Foods for those with high serum triacylglycerol	Diacylglycerol and sitosterol	9	Cooking oil
Foods related to mineral absorption and transport	Casein, Calcium citrate Isoflavone	17	Soft drink, fermented soyabean (natto), jelly
Non-cariogenic foods	Manitol, Polyphenols, Palatinose, Xylitol	6	Chocolate, chewing gum,
Foods for those who begin to feel concerned about their blood sugar level	Wheat albumin, Globin digest Polyphenols	4	Candy soup, soft drinks

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Grazing for weight loss



A new way of eating has hit the battle against overweight. "Grazing", or eating five to six **small meals** instead of three main meals a day is believed to help an individual achieve weight loss goals. The key is to reduce total daily calorie intake by eating moderately and avoiding the temptation to overeat.

There are many reasons why this way of eating works.

Firstly, mini-meals through the day keep the metabolism smooth and active. It has been observed that each time an individual eats, the body burns calories to digest the meal and this stimulates the metabolism. Secondly, experts say that eating less but more often helps prevent



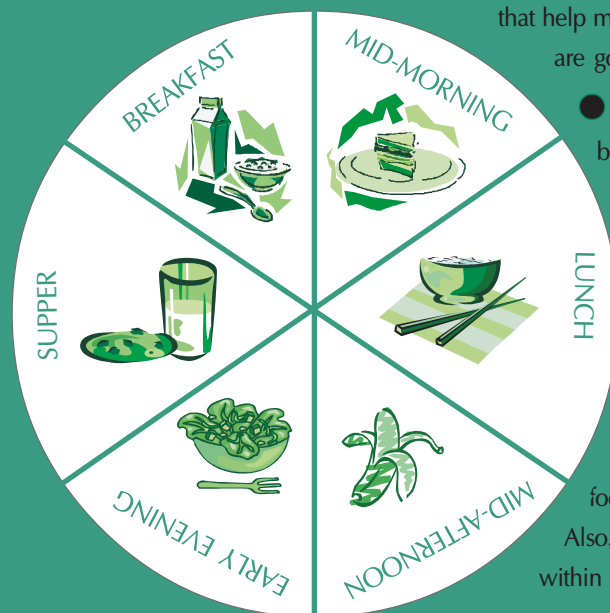
the out-of-control hunger that can lead to overeating at the main meal. In two different studies conducted by Dr. David P. Speechly, of the University of Witwatersrand Medical School in Johannesburg, South Africa, it was observed that men who had their breakfast as small portions through the morning ate 27% less at lunch, than men who ate breakfast as a single meal. Thirdly, researchers also believe that frequent feedings help maintain stable sugar and insulin levels in the bloodstream. A stable insulin level stops the body from burning fat and delays fat storage. Lastly, permission to eat a little something through the day helps motivate individuals to make the mini-meal diet a habit and keeps the weight off for life.

For a successful graze...

To successfully include mini-meals in a weight-loss plan one should:

- **Graze in a habit** : Five to six meals daily might sound overwhelming, but if you slowly add one meal at a time until it becomes a habit, increasing the number of meals will not be difficult. You could start with breakfast, if it is not already a part of the daily meal plan and break up big main meals, for example, half a bowl of noodles can be eaten at lunch and the other half later in the afternoon.
- **Draw up a grocery checklist** : The availability of food makes sticking to a weight loss plan easier. Plan a weekly menu, chalk out a shopping list and buy all required items in advance. Buy just the right quantity, for example, half a kilo of raw meat or fish is just right for a family of four and it reduces the temptation to eat more. Choose low carbohydrate, high-protein and moderate fat snacks

that help maintain stable insulin levels and provide sustained energy. Vegetables and fruit are good low-calorie fillers.



- **Be wary of excesses** : The bottom line for losing weight is that you must burn up more calories than you consume. Recent research reveals that portion sizes have gotten bigger - hence, it is important to retrain your appetite to eat less. When at home - cook just enough, portion out food onto your plate once and avoid taking a second helping. When eating out, share a big meal with someone, ask for small portions or pack up the excesses even before you start eating.

- **Build in a balance** : There are no 'good' or 'bad' foods, but to keep calorie intake in check, balance the occasional indulgence of high-fat and foods with low-fat and low-energy or low-calorie foods in the course of the day. Also, balance a big lunch with a small snack and dinner later in the day, to stay within the daily recommended portions for each food group.

Source

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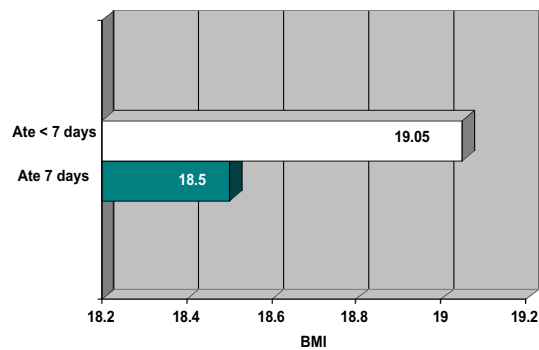
Food Facts Asia

Fluid Up for Fitness

Erratum

Some readers, received copies of Issue 16, November 2002, with uncorrected error: page 4 Focus on Tweenie Health, Lifestyle factors positively associated with overweight and obesity. The correct breakfast frequency graph, is given opposite.

Breakfast Frequency



NEWS BITES



BIOSAFETY REPORT FROM UN Industrial Development Organisation

A new report on “Biosafety Policy Options and Capacity Building Related to Genetically Modified Organisms in the Food Processing Industry of ASEAN”, authored by Dr. Sakarindr Bhumiratana of BIOTEC, Thailand provides an overview of the structure of food processing and biotechnology foods in the region, and institutional frameworks currently established at national and regional levels. The report also provides an analysis of the main emerging issues, challenges and trends relating to biotechnology foods and the food processing industry; as well as recommendations on possible policy options and mechanisms for their implementation. The full report can be downloaded at http://www.isaaa.org/kc/Global_Status/global/Biosafety/biosafemenu.htm in PDF and html.

SOY AND FISH OILS REDUCE MORTALITY RATES IN JAPANESE POPULATION

Researchers from Gifu University in Japan reviewed food records of 13,355 male and 15,724 females. During a seven year follow-up period, 1,163 men and 899 women died. The study found that the men and women who consumed the highest levels of soy were least likely to die of any cause during the study. Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil and fatty fish such as salmon and mackerel were also associated with a lower risk of premature death among women, but not men.

The Japanese who have the highest life expectancy in the world, traditionally eat a diet which includes a great deal of fish and soy. Soya food products are rich in isoflavones, which are thought to protect against some forms of cancer and the risk of heart disease. Omega-3 fatty acids are associated with reduced levels of inflammation in the body, reduced clotting, improved blood cholesterol levels and perhaps also reduced blood pressure.

The researchers comment, that more research is needed on the relationship between these bioactive compounds and specific diseases such as cancer, stroke and heart disease. The full paper was published in the Am J Epidemiol 2002; 156:824-831.

WHO IDENTIFIES TOP TEN HEALTH RISKS

The 2002 World Health Organization’s (WHO’s) World Health Report, entitled “Reducing risks, Promoting Healthy Life” identifies the top ten global health risk factors in terms of the burden of disease they are responsible for as follows: underweight, unsafe sex, high blood pressure; tobacco consumption; alcohol consumption; unsafe water, poor sanitation and hygiene; iron deficiency; indoor smoke from solid fuels; high cholesterol; and obesity.

The report also highlights that iron deficiency is one of the most prevalent nutrient deficiencies in the world, affecting an estimated two billion people, and causing almost a million deaths a year; vitamin A deficiency is the leading cause of acquired blindness in children, while iodine deficiency is probably the single most preventable cause of mental retardation and brain damage. Severe zinc deficiency is also noted as a significant cause of respiratory infections, malaria, diarrhoeal disease, short stature, impaired immune function and other disorders. The report recommends that “priority should be given to controlling those risks that are well known, common, substantial and widespread, and for which effective and acceptable risk reduction strategies are available”. An overview of the report in six languages can be downloaded at <http://www.who.int/whr/en/>.

What's Going On ?

Meeting	When	Where	Contact
1st World Congress on Food Irradiation (In conjunction with FMI Show 2003)	May 5 - 7, 2003	McCormick Place, Chicago, IL USA	National Food Safety & Toxicology Centre Attn: 1st World Congress on Food Irradiation 165 Food Safety & Toxicology Building Michigan State University East Lansing MI 48824-1302 USA Fax : 517-432-2310 www.foodsafe.msu.edu/Congress/congress.html
12th European Congress on Obesity	May 29 - June 1, 2003	Helsinki Fair Centre, Finland	Congress Secretariat: CONGREX / Blue & White Conference Oy PO Box 81 Sulkapolku 3, 3rd Floor FIN 00371-Helsinki Finland Tel : +358-9-560-7500 Fax : +358-9-560-75020 Email: eco2003@congrex.fi Registered online: www.congrex.fi/eco2003online.htm www.suomenlihavuustukijat.fi/eco2003/index.htm
2nd Congress of the International Academy of Nutrition Aging	July 10 - 12, 2003	Albuquerque NM, USA	International Academy & Nutrition Aging, Sylvie Lauque www.healthandage.com/html/min/iananda/content/albuquerque.htm Email: lauque.sylvie@wanadoo.fr
BioThailand 2003: Technology for Life	July 17 - 20, 2003	Pattaya Exhibition & Convention Hall, Pattaya, Thailand	BioThailand 2003 Secretariat National Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (BIOTEC) 113 Paholyothin Rd., Klong 1, Klong Luang Pathumthani 12120 THAILAND Tel : +66 2564 6700 Fax : +66 2564 6701 to 5 Email:biothailand2003@biotec.or.th http://biothailand.biotec.or.th/
2nd Asia-Oceania Conference on Obesity (MASO 2003)	September 7 - 9, 2003	Renaissance Kuala Lumpur Hotel, Malaysia	Prof. Mohd Ismail Noor/Dr Nik Mazlan Mamat c/o Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Jalan Raja Muda Abdul Aziz, 50300 Kuala Lumpur. Tel: 603-4040 5679 Fax: 603-2694 1296 Email: mismail@medic.ukm.my, nmazlan@medic.ukm.my www.iaso.org/conferences/maso2003.htm
5th International Symposium on Role of Soy in Preventing and Treating Chronic Disease	September 21-24, 2003	Orlando, Florida, USA	Terri Reifsteck Marketing Specialist American Oil Chemists' Society P.O. Box 3489 Champaign, IL 61826-3489 Tel : 217-359-5401 ext. 103 Fax : 217-351-8091 Email: terrir@aocs.org www.aocs.org/meetings/soy03/
4th Asian Conference Food & Nutrition Safety	September 23-25, 2003	Bali, Indonesia	ILSI Southeast Asia Region 1 Newton Road, Goldhill Plaza Podium Block #03-45 Singapore 308899 Tel : (65) 6352 5220 Fax : (65) 6352 5536 Email: ilsiea@singnet.com.sg

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<input type="checkbox"/> What You Should Know About Food-borne illness	<input type="checkbox"/> Kid's Bites: A Healthy Lifestyle Guide
<input type="checkbox"/> Children's Activity Pyramid Poster	<input type="checkbox"/> AFIC Review Paper on Food Biotechnology
<input type="checkbox"/> A Communication Guide to Improve Understanding Food Biotechnology	<input type="checkbox"/> Take 10 tips for healthy eating and physical activity
<input type="checkbox"/> A Communication Guide to Improve Understanding Food Biotechnology (Thai Language)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Previous copies of Food Facts Asia are also available; please specify Issue no.	

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