

Report of the meeting of IUNS/UNU/FAO INFOODS Task Force

held on 14 and 16 September 2011 at the 9th International Food Data Conference, Norwich,
United Kingdom

List of Participants

Ruth Charrondiere	FAO, INFOODS coordinator
Barbara Burlingame*	FAO, INFOODS*
Barbara Stadlmayr	FAO, INFOODS
Henrietta Ene-Obong representing Isaac Akinyele	AFROFOODS
Hettie Schönfeldt	AFROFOODS
Christiant Kouebou*	CAFOODS coordinator
Judy Cunningham*	OCEANIAFOODS
Heather Greenfield*	OCEANIAFOODS
T. Longvah*	SAARCFOODS coordinator
Adriana Bianco	LATINFOODS coordinator
Norma Samman	LATINFOODS
Elizabete Wenzel Menezes	BRASILFOODS
Yang Yuexin	NEASIAFOODS coordinator
Dr Wang	NEASIAFOODS
Prapasri Puwastien	ASEANFOODS coordinator
Kunchit Judprasong	ASEANFOODS
Joanne Holden	NORAMFOODS coordinator
Catherine Champagne*	USA
Paul Finglas	EUROFOODS coordinator
Paul Hulshof*	Dep. of Human Nutrition, Wageningen, Netherlands

* attended the meeting on 16 September only

I. Welcome

Ruth Charrondiere, newly-appointed INFOODS coordinator, opened the INFOODS meetings and welcomed all participants.

II. Regional coordinators presented their achievements from 2010-2011 and future working plans until 2013

General

All regional data centres contributed to the scientific content of the 9th International Food Data Conference (IFDC) and participated in the 9th IFDC. Many presented their work in oral presentations or through posters. Several INFOODS members also attended the FAO International Symposium on Sustainable Diets and Biodiversity held in November 2010 in Rome, Italy. Many countries updated their national food composition databases (FCDB) or tables (FCT) with partially newly analysed data. Some regional data centre websites were created and updated. Many INFOODS publications, guidelines and distance learning material are available, as well as databases and tools (see INFOODS website http://www.fao.org/infoods/index_en.stm) which enable every country to develop its own food composition programme and to publish high-quality FCDBs and FCTs according to INFOODS standards.

AFROFOODS (presented by Henrietta Ene-Obong)

Achievements:

- The new AFROFOODS coordinator Isaac Akinyele (since 2011) contacted all participants of former food composition courses in Africa, but many e-mail addresses were no longer valid.
- The AFROFOODS meeting took place in September 2011 (the previous meeting was in 2009) which Ruth Charrondiere and colleagues could not attend due to the bombing of the UN building in Abuja, nor could Zohra Lukmanji (ECSAFOODS). The meeting was sponsored by FAO Rome and others. Isaac Akinyele, together with the coordinators or their representatives from CAFOODS and WAFOODS (francophone and anglophone) and with many participants from Nigeria and WAHO (Ismael Thiam), agreed on a plan of action for one year with a time frame and assigned activities:
 - Prepare a list of experts in food composition activities.
 - Establish a coordinator in each country.
 - Document and compile biodiversity data.
 - Develop and implement advocacy and marketing strategies.
 - Conduct institutional assessment concerning food composition work.
 - Carry out future training courses on food composition as soon as funds are available.
 - Establish an AFROFOOD Secretariat at regional and sub regional levels.

To implement this plan, funding is needed and this is difficult to obtain as governments and other donors are not very interested in food composition. Therefore, advocacy is badly needed in Africa.

LATINFOODS (presented by Adriana Bianco)

Achievements:

- LATINFOODS hold a meeting every third year at the Latin American Nutrition Symposium where the new president and vice-president are elected.
- Six national FCDBs were updated as well as that of LATINFOODS.
- A new FCDB management software is under development.
- Four national branches were reactivated.
- The FAO Project TCP/RLA 3107 (involving Argentina, Chile and Paraguay) finished with very good results.
- Work was undertaken on the sodium content in foods in South America (poster was presented on the 9th IFDC), and outcomes will be fed into the international database on salt which is coordinated by Elizabeth Dunford from Australia.
- Three new people will be trained at the Wageningen course in October 2011 (through INF funding).
- On-going activities on bioactive components (Argentina).
- Newsletter (for 50-60 people) is sent out every 3 to 4 months to inform people about achievements and future activities of LATINFOODS.

Future plans:

- Software has to be optimized and implemented and new data need to be compiled into it.
- Funding is needed and sources need to be explored.

- To make the General Assembly of LATINFOODS, a Symposium of FAO/LATINFOODS/ SLAN and/or a pre-congress course at the Latin-American Nutrition Congress, Cuba, November 2012.
- Private sector, identify areas of international cooperation with Europe (e.g. to obtain cooperation with EUROFOODS).
- Regional workshop, could also be undertaken electronically, via Skype.
- Webpage to be translated also in English (not just in Spanish).
- Visibility is needed. Show the government the importance and relevance of the work on food composition. A formal letter from FAO INFOODS could help to raise more funding for food composition work. The letter should be modified for every coordinator's situation.
- Improve communication within the INFOODS regional data centres, exchange information.

EUROFOODS (presented by Paul Finglas)

Achievements and future plans:

- EuroFIR project obtained new funds for 2 more years (1 million euros for 2 years)
- Next meetings are planned for 2012 and 2013.
- The CEN "European Food Standard on Food Composition" is expected to be signed in 2012.
- Certification of national compilers is planned (evaluation through peer review). It is hoped that through this certificate that the compilers will obtain more recognition and funds in their countries.
- Continue to support capacity development through the Food Composition Courses at the University in Wageningen and a planned course in Turkey for the Middle-eastern European countries.
- Expand the e-learning tool.
- Continue with newsletters.
- Collaboration with IARC and EFSA (combining EuroFIR FCDB with food consumption data in Europe).
- Work on the evidence base for nutrition policies.

Hettie Schönfeldt mentioned that after using the e-learning tools from the University of Wageningen/ EuroFIR at the course in Pretoria she needed to pay a fee (without prior notice). Ways should be found to avoid such situations in the future.

NEASIAFOODS (presented by Yang Yuexin)

Achievements:

- Exchange information/data, if there are updates.
- Visit laboratories in different areas to assess how they work.
- Meetings:
 - International Food Science Meeting in 2010 NEASIAFOODS meeting in Mongolia (25 members attended)
 - in July 2011 at the Asia Nutrition Conference (ACN) in Singapore a seminar on food composition was organized by NEASIAFOODS and SAARCFOODS which was highly appreciated by participants.

- Studies on the use of carbohydrate and energy definitions were conducted in different countries to see the differences/consistencies.
- China, Korea and Japan receive funds from the governments. However, additional funds, e.g. from industry, are often needed to analyse foods.

Future plans:

- NEASIAFOODS meetings are planned every 2 years. Probably the timing will be changed to coincide with ACN conferences, the next one being planned in Japan.
- Total fatty acids studies.
- To translate the NEASIAFOODS website into English.
- A food composition table is planned on traditional foods, GMO foods, bioactive foods – for all these categories different FCTs exist, it is too complex – these need to be harmonized.
- To undertake training courses.
- To publish an updated Chinese FCDB (4,000 food items, 32 nutrients); maybe within the next 3 years with more food items; action to promote a study; nutrient survey).

ASEANFOODS (presented by Prapasri Puwastien)

Achievements:

- ASEANFOODS has 10 member countries. No news from Lao and Brunei Darussalam at the moment.
- After the first version of the ASEAN FCT, Vietnam (2007) and Singapore (2003) updated their FCDB
- Two proficiency tests were carried out to strengthen laboratories.
- Published the ASEAN Manual of Food Analysis, available online at: <http://www.inmu.mahidol.ac.th/aseanfoods/Activities.htm>.
- Three scientific papers were published on ASEANFOODS work in the Journal of Food Composition and Analysis.
- The 6th ASEANFOODS Workshop was organised in Thailand during 18-21 July 2011 (15 participants from 6 countries) with the financial support of International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI). It included training on biodiversity and compilation using the INFOODS/FAO Compilation Tool.

Future plans:

- The next ASEANFOODS meeting and publication of the new ASEAN FCT are both planned for 2013.
- Members intend to use the INFOODS/FAO Compilation Tool (or hopefully its ACCESS version).
- Put FCDB on line.
- Harmonize data and harmonize with INFOODS guidelines and standards.
- Organise proficiency study by ASEANFOODS Regional Centre and the member countries.
- Provide training courses on data generation, compilation and quality control system, on request.
- Revise and update the ASEANFOODS Website regularly.
- Support INFOODS activities.

SAARCFOODS: Achievements and future plan of work

The third SAARCFOODS meeting was held in Colombo 18-19 October 2010 which was attended by country representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri

Lanka. Representatives from Maldives and Afghanistan are yet to be identified. It was recommended that all the member countries should

- undertake systematic studies on identifying biodiversity in the local foods and study their nutrient composition.
- develop a SAARC food composition table in addition to updating the national food composition tables and developing a new one for those countries which do not yet have a food composition table. India and Bangladesh are preparing new tables to be published in 2013
- participate in the forthcoming PT studies on nutrients in foods which will be open to all interested laboratories in Asian countries. The study will be initiated in 2012 and interested parties may contact the SAARCFOODS coordinator (tlongvah@gmail.com)

NORAMFOODS (presented by Joanne Holden)

Canada up-dates

- new 2010 version of the Canadian Nutrient File, now online in English and in French with 115 nutrients and 5,800 foods.
- Nutrient analysis programme with Health Canada.
- New analysis will be done on the iodine content of foods.
- Became a member of EuroFIR.
- Dietary Guidelines, Dietary References.

USA updates

- SR24 will be released in September 2011 with up-dates on pork, beef, chicken, turkey and lamb.
- The next National Nutrient Databank Conference will be held in March 2012 in Houston, which will also be attended by colleagues from Canada and other countries.
- Through the sodium initiative more foods were analysed for their sodium content.
- More funds for analytical work were obtained through commodity boards (pork, beef, chicken, turkey and lamb) than from industry for processed foods.
- Dietary supplement database has been in existence for 3 years. The need for such a database was recognized since a huge percentage of adults reported having taken supplements. In the future, it is planned to add children's products and products on omega -3 FA. The publication of the second version of the database is planned for the end of 2011 or beginning of 2012.

CAFOODS (presented by Ruth Charrondiere on behalf of Christiant Kouebou)

Nine proposals were submitted but none of them was funded. There is a need to find funding for compilation and new analysis of foods. The compilation of a newly-revised Cameroon FCT has been ongoing since 2009.

OCEANIAFOODS (presented by Ruth Charrondiere on behalf of Judy Cunningham)

The OCEANIAFOODS coordinator Bill Aalbersberg seems to be semi-retired. Judy Cunningham may take over the position or another person from her institute (if agreed upon by INFOODS). There will be no OCENIAFOODS meeting this year. Many activities on food composition and food consumption are going on in Australia and New Zealand, less is known about the Pacific Islands.

III. Points discussed during the meetings

- **Advocacy, communication and dissemination.** It was recognized that INFOODS' products (e.g. standards, guidelines, tools and databases) are not widely known at country and international level. Therefore, it was agreed that the communication and advocacy strategy should be improved:
 - More advocacy work has to be done in order to make governments and other stakeholders more aware of the importance of food composition in the various areas besides nutrition, e.g. food labelling, prevention of non-communicable diseases, biodiversity, sustainable diets and agriculture.
 - **Logos** for regional data centres help to increase their visibility and so do web pages. Some regional data centres have already developed a logo (LATINFOODS, AFROFOODS), others agreed to develop a logo (ASEANFOODS). Other regional data centres may do so in the future.
 - FAO in collaboration with INFOODS members could produce a **leaflet** on INFOODS (on e.g. its role, objective, products and structure).
 - **Visibility of INFOODS.** It was agreed that much of INFOODS work is not known'. Therefore, INFOODS activities have to be promoted more actively:
 - More people should subscribe to the INFOODS Listserv where news about standards, guidelines, databases are shared and disseminated (by end of September 2011, there were over 100 new subscribers).
 - Regional data centres should increasingly show what they have achieved by reporting on their activities at national, regional and international level (e.g. at INFOODS website as well as regional data centre websites).
 - Include seminars on food composition at international conferences on nutrition and food technology, e.g. at the next Latin American congress on Nutrition in 2012 a seminar on food composition is planned, as well at the up-coming IUNS conference in Granada in 2013. A seminar was already held at the ACN in 2011 and a presentation at FANUS in 2011. More of these activities should be carried out at international conferences by INFOODS and regional data centres.
 - Promotion of INFOODS guidelines and tools should be increased aiming at **industry and laboratories** for them to improve their data quality and to further stimulate their interest in food composition which could motivate them to provide more funding for food analysis and to publish these data.
 - **Codex Alimentarius.** Three Codex committees exist which are relevant to food composition: CCNFSDU, CCFL and CCMAS on nutrition and foods for special dietary use, food labelling and methods of analysis/sampling, respectively. INFOODS has official observer status and can participate in these meetings. Food labelling needs food composition data and experts to apply them correctly for labelling. Pre- and post-Codex Committee meetings can be organized to make Codex members more aware of the importance of food composition and INFOODS – such meetings could be organized by FAO in collaboration with INFOODS.
- **The formalization of INFOODS** was discussed
 - Concern was raised that some regional data centres and national branches are less active than others. It could also be that activities are being carried out but that they are not known by INFOODS.
 - A proposal was made to summarize the general information about INFOODS including the roles and tasks of coordinators, the structure, of who is part of the network and how it is possible to establish a more formal relationship with

- INFOODS. These guidelines should be published at the INFOODS webpage (and probably be included in the leaflet on INFOODS).
- The letters from FAO to INFOODS regional coordinators in December 2010 were well received by the coordinators and the institutes where they work as it gave another profile to the food composition work done by the different INFOODS regional coordinators. The possibility was discussed of extending these letters to national coordinators or even establishing a memorandum of understanding between FAO/INFOODS and the national and regional data centres to strengthen their position and increase the awareness of the importance of food composition work and funding. It was agreed that an institutional commitment gives more strength to achieving better food composition programmes and that it would increase the quality and quantity of outputs and thus boost recognition and visibility. Barbara Burlingame, FAO, raised awareness about being cautious that INFOODS cannot give a mandate for a food composition programme to an organization or institution. In many countries, it is already established which governmental department or institute has the mandate to coordinate the national food composition programme (even if they might not be very active). National INFOODS coordinators should therefore study carefully the country situation, probably also with the assistance of regional coordinators before approaching the INFOODS coordinator.
 - **Sources of funding** were discussed and how to obtain funds in different countries.
 - For some countries, it is relatively easy to obtain funds for food composition (e.g. for the US from the Department of Agriculture, for Europeans from the European Commission). In other countries, this is more difficult but potential regional funding providers should be identified and be approached, e.g. CORAF (West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development) for West and Central Africa.
 - Another option to obtain more funds, also from governments, is through the emerging importance of nutrition labelling and the prevention of non-communicable diseases (e.g. salt reduction). Nutrition labelling could become an excellent means of promoting food composition data since governments and the food industry may become more interested in investigating and in analytical work for nutrition labelling (as shown by example from Hong Kong).
 - Collaborating with commodity boards has been successful in some countries (e.g. South Africa, Australia and USA), rarely with food industries. This possibility could be explored in other countries as well.
 - **The 10th IFDC** will be held in 2013 in Granada, Spain. For the 11th IFDC, two proposals were put forward, one from the National Institute of Nutrition in Hyderabad, India, and another through Yang for Japan (to be confirmed). For the next IFDC in Granada in 2013 a discussion was held on the distribution of information about INFOODS and its regional data centres through a leaflet.
 - **Deadline for manuscript submission for the 9th IFDC.** Scientific papers should be submitted to FOOD CHEMISTRY (deadline for manuscripts end of October 2011). It will become a supplement/like a special issue. They will be peer reviewed.
 - **IUNS/INFOODS Taskforce:** In the past, IUNS requested new members for its task forces who should be younger than 40 years; taking into account gender and global

representative balance. They should have contributed to food composition activities in their own country.

→ People interested in become members of the INFOODS Task Force should send their nomination to Ruth Charrondiere. INFOODS will prepare a template with duties of Task Force members.

→ Those not wanting to continue should also forward their decision to Ruth Charrondiere (Henrietta Ene-Obong is interested in joining).

- Paul Hulshof reported that funds available for **Capacity development** to carry out food composition courses, e.g. as offered in Wageningen, are constantly being reduced even though training is essential. Some places are still available in the course taking place in October 2011 in Wageningen. He offered a 10% discount for INFOODS.

As there was not enough time to go through the proposed **work plan for INFOODS (Annex 1)**, the regional coordinators were invited to send their comments through e-mail by 15 October 2011.

It may be necessary to **hold additional virtual meetings** by telephone to decide on:

- formal INFOODS membership
- development of a leaflet including roles and tasks of regional and national coordinators
- finalization of the INFOODS work plan for 2011-2013
- possible ways of improving communication and advocacy.