

The European Symposium on Health claims on food (HEALTH CLAIMS AND biomarkers. INTERACTION METING WITH EU STAKEHOLDERS) is held on 12 and 13 February in Palma de Mallorca (UIB, Campus, Escola d'Hoteleria).

**Over one hundred leading experts in Food & Health in Europe participate**, coming from the scientific, legal and regulatory areas, research centers across different EU countries, the European Commission, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food Security and Nutrition (AECOSAN), leader industries in the food sector, etc.

The Symposium is **coordinated by Professor Palou and his group of the UIB (University of the Balearic Islands) and CIBERobn (Spanish Biomedical Research Centre in Physiopathology of Obesity and Nutrition)**, with the technical support of the UIB's technology-based company Alimentómica. Main aim is to facilitate interaction among all stakeholders interested on the new European framework of Food & Health, which entails a legislation (Health Claims on Food) that is probably the most complex one developed in Europe so far.

Thanks to the rigor imposed by the European food law, **publicity on health claims on food is undergoing a radical change**, which has remarkable health implications and is causing a huge economic impact on the industry.

**The legislation allows publishing effects of food on health only if accredited by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)** and, based on this accreditation, approved basically by the European Commission.

**Out of more than 44,000 slogans** in EU containing health claims on food by 2006, **only about 260 survived**, most of them related to effects of vitamins and other essential nutrients that were already known for years.

**The new Regulation does not allow ambiguous statements on health properties of food.** Instead, health claims should be clear and based on clearly demonstrated effects on function and other specific health outcomes, which can be quantified through the analysis of

**biomarkers** that reflect "real and relevant health benefits". For example, blood cholesterol is a good biomarker because its reduction involves decreasing a risk factor for certain cardiovascular diseases and it is promoted by various foods (high in fiber) or various food components such as plant sterols added to certain dairy products. Another example relates to olive oil, whose polyphenols possess a beneficial antioxidant effect on blood lipids (from an intake of 5 mg in 20 milliliters of oil), or whose oleic acid (if ingested instead of saturated fat) decreases a risk factor for coronary heart disease.

**Although numerous food components presumably have certain beneficial health effects, in many cases accreditation by EFSA has failed due to the unavailability of good reliable biomarkers.** In the absence of such biomarkers, presumed effects cannot be sufficiently demonstrated. **BIOCLAIMS, the European project coordinated by the UIB (group of Prof. Andreu Palou), seeks to identify through nutrigenomics technologies new biomarkers that can be used by the food industry in the next decade,** opening up new possibilities for accreditation of food and guidelines of healthy eating.

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It is a meeting of interaction between experts from different fields as interested partners (stakeholders) in the food & health sector in Europe. These partners bring different perspectives: European Commission; EFSA (European Food Safety Authority); main leading companies in Europe; jurists; managers of regulatory cabinets, etc., together with scientists from the UIB, CIBERobn and the various countries participating in the European project BIOCLAIMS, which is coordinated from the UIB. The symposium is funded by the EC.

Two networks of R&D excellence funded by the Spanish Government are also interacting, one from the agri-food sphere (MARCASALUD) and one from the biomedical and clinical sphere (Program on Biomarkers of CIBERobn), both coordinated by the UIB research team.

Among others, participants include representatives of AECOSAN (Spanish Agency of Consumer Affairs, Food Security and Nutrition), the FIAB's (Spanish Food and Drink Industry Federation) legal bureau, and

the technology-based UIB company ALIMENTÓMICA, which is responsible for the organization and technical coordination.

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At this meeting, both the latest news at European level on the legal regulation concerning the advertising of health claims on food and new scientific knowledge in this field are presented. As for the identification of new potential biomarkers, **the group of the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB), in the framework of the BIOCLAIMS project, is presenting a new nutrigenomic biomarker** of possible application from the earliest stages of life, predictive of the development of obesity and useful in the prevention of this problem and its complications. This biomarker has been the subject of a patent co-owned by the UIB and the Spanish Biomedical Research Centre in Physiopathology of Obesity and Nutrition (CIBERObn).  
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Professor Andreu Palou and the management team of BIOCLAIMS will offer a briefing at 10 a.m. on February 12, in the press room (aula de graus) of the Escola d'Hoteleria within the Campus of the University of the Balearic Islands.

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