

2nd International Conference on East-West Perspectives on Functional Foods: Science, Innovations and Claims

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< Summary >

“2nd International Conference on East-West Perspectives on Functional Foods: Science, Innovations and Claims” was held in Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur for 3 days from 5th to 7th of November, 2007. This conference was followed by the 1st international conference held in Singapore in 1995. More than 200 of participants from various countries had active discussion on more than 30 of oral presentations and on poster sessions. In this meeting, there were wide varieties of papers on the active foods and compounds, on health claims, on how to evaluate scientific evidence, on market analysis, and on the communication methods with the consumer.

In European union (EU) countries, in Australia and New Zealand, and in the Southeast Asian countries, to remove trade barrier risk, new attempts to establish common set of rules applicable to nutrition and health claims have begun. The characteristics of the rules for labeling (nutrient claim, healthy function indication) system of the food in each area were introduced.

The 27 member countries of EU now have a common set of rules for nutrition and health claims made on foods. That is Regulation (EC) N° 1924/2006 of 20 December 2006. It has been directly applicable in all member countries of the EU since 1 July 2007. EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) has the primary responsibility for evaluating the scientific evidence.

In Australia and New Zealand, FSANZ (Food Standards Australia New Zealand) is now in the final stage of developing a new standard to permit labelling claims. Foods, whose nutrient profiles are basically unhealthy, are not permitted to be put health claims on them. And the claims are divided into three types; nutrition content claims, general level health claims, and high level health claims.

ILSI SEAR (ILSI Southeast Asia Region) organized several workshops to help countries in Southeast Asia Region, to set up the common regulatory framework for nutrition labeling and claims.

In USA, a document which shows how the scientific evidence for a health claim is evaluated is available in FDA’s website. And FDA publishes letters which show results of evaluation for application data in the FDA/CFSAN website. This transparency of such an argument is useful for investigators to prepare appropriate evidence or for consumers to choose healthier products.

In this meeting, market trend and regulation or evaluation of scientific evidences for FOSHU

(Food for specified health uses), were introduced. I could recognize that participants from various countries showed much more interest for FOSHU than I had expected.