



IUFoST DISTINGUISHED LECTURER SENDS STRONG NUTRITION-RELATED MESSAGE

The link between the controversial concept of “ultra-processed” food and nutrition-related medical conditions was challenged by Distinguished Lecturer Professor Michael Gibney* in a keynote address that opened the 18th World Congress of Food Science and Technology held in Dublin, Ireland (August 21 to 25, 2016). Michael Gibney is Professor of Food and Health at University College Dublin (UCD) and Chair of the Irish Food Safety Authority (FSAI).

Sound nutrition science formed the basis of his lecture, during which he discussed the impact of nutritional requirements of both infants and the elderly on future food science and technology priorities. He also focused on myths relating to nutritional needs of the mainstream population in between these two categories.

Professor Gibney was sharply critical of the poor quality of the science behind a number of controversial nutritional activist movements, and in particular the emergence of the concept of so-called “ultraprocessed” food, which appears to focus on the way a food is processed as a measure of its nutritional acceptability, rather than its quantifiable nutritional attributes.

Professor Gibney showed that there is no credible scientific evidence behind the “ultra-processed” food concept. No nutrition-related medical conditions have ever been linked to the use of processing in food production and these conditions were entirely related to actual nutrient intake and not to the level of processing. He suggested that the rationale behind the “ultra-processed” concept appeared to be more political than scientific in nature and raised a strong cautionary note about regulators and policy makers being influenced by activist movements in spite of their illogical and unscientific bases.

Distinguished Lecturer Professor Michael Gibney also noted: “Nutritional science has made great progress in recent years identifying the nutritional basis of conditions such as neural tube defects, age related macular degeneration, plasma lipids, both cholesterol fractions and triacylglycerols, sugar and dental caries, sodium, potassium and riboflavin in relation to blood pressure and the role of n-3 long chain Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids (PUFA) in cognition and in vascular disease. The responsible nutrients come from a wide range of foods in different cultures and it is imperative that these foods be identified and, on that basis, dietary patterns altered. Lumping foods together based on their degree of processing is a retrograde step in public health nutrition. Regrettably, some of the international agencies charged with delivering public health nutrition solutions, have deviated from the official WHO/FAO advice** of the formulation of food-based dietary guidelines which specifically work back from implicated nutrients to food patterns to public health nutrition advice.”

*IUFoST Distinguished Lecturers are world-renowned scientists in areas relevant to food science and technology and are invited to present the principal keynote lecture at each world congress of food science and technology.

**WHO/NUT/96.6 Report of a joint FAO/WHO consultation Nicosia, Cyprus Preparation and use of food-based dietary guidelines. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/X0243E/x0243e00.htm>

Distinguished Lecturers

Distinguished Lecturers at past IUFoST World Congresses have included Dr. Brian Keating (2014),

Director of the Sustainable Agriculture National Research Flagship within the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO); Dr. Shenggen Fan (2012), Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); Dr. Nina Fedoroff (2010), Science and Technology Advisor to Secretaries of State Condoleezza Rice and Hilary Clinton; Dr. M.S. Swaminathan (2008), pioneer of the Green Revolution and World Food Prize recipient; Dr. Catherine Bertini (2006), former Executive Director of the World Food Programme and recipient of the World Food Prize; and Dr. Ismail Serageldin (2003), the former Vice President of the World Bank and Head of the Library of Alexandria. Earlier Distinguished Lecturers/Founders Lecturers have included Professor Owen Fennema (2001); Dr. Richard L. Hall (1999); Professor J. F. Diehl (1995); and Professor Joseph Hulse (1991).

Professor Michael Gibney

Professor Michael Gibney, MAgrSc, MA, PhD, is Professor of Food and Health at University College, Dublin (UCD) a post he took up in 2006 and Chairman of the Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. (FSAI). He graduated from UCD with a MAgrSc in 1971, and took up a teaching fellowship at the University of Sydney's Veterinary School and was awarded a PhD in 1976. From there, he moved to human nutrition, with a lectureship at the University of Southampton Medical School in 1977 and then returned to Dublin to take up a post at Trinity College, Dublin in the Department of Clinical Medicine as Professor of Nutrition. During that time, he served as Dean (Vice President) of Research. He served as President of the Nutrition Society from 1995-1998 and served on the EU Scientific Committee for Food from 1985 to 1997 and chaired the working group on nutrition. From 1997 to 2000, he served on the EU Scientific Steering Committee and was chair of its working group on BSE. He has served on European Union and United Nations committees on Health and Nutrition and is the principal investigator on several national and European Union projects. He serves on the scientific committee of the Sackler, Institute of Nutrition at the New York Academy of Sciences and is a participant in the Google Food Experience Innovation Laboratory.

IUFoST

The International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFoST) is the global scientific organisation for food science and technology, representing over 300,000 members from more than 75 countries. IUFoST has five regional groupings: ALACCTA representing Central and South America; EFFoST representing Europe; FIFSTA representing the ASEAN countries; MENAFoST representing the Middle East and North Africa; and WAAFoST representing West Africa. IUFoST is a full scientific member elected by its scientific peers across disciplines in ICSU (International Council for Science), and it represents food science and technology to other international organisations.

IUFoST organises world food congresses, among many other activities, to stimulate the ongoing exchange of knowledge in those scientific disciplines and technologies relating to the expansion, improvement, distribution and conservation of the world's food supply.