



Science for Health: ILSI Europe's Third Decade

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Science is the most solid foundation for human progress and public health decision-making. Not because science is perfect, or the only way to truth. But as a way forward for humankind, it is hard to beat. Most importantly, in its quest for knowledge and truth, it has developed strong mechanisms to constantly check and improve itself.

Many public health issues involve multiple stakeholders and are most optimally addressed by enlisting their combined scientific expertise. Therefore within the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) we have developed a tripartite model in which scientists from academia, government, industry and other science-based stakeholders can discuss and reach consensus on topics of common interest in a neutral forum. The success of this model is borne out by the more than a dozen ILSI entities all over the world. For more than twenty years, ILSI's European branch (ILSI Europe) has been facilitating scientific meetings and publications in Europe. As an international non-profit organisation based in Brussels, Belgium, ILSI Europe collaborates with the European Commission, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and Codex Alimentarius.

Collaborating in multilateral projects with shared funding, ILSI Europe's industry members are its main funding source. In addition, an increasing amount of funds has been obtained from the highly competitive 5th and 6th Framework Programmes of DG Research of the European Commission, i.e. the FOSIE, FUFOSSE, PASSCLAIM, BRAFO and EURRECA projects.

Membership of ILSI Europe is open to all food and beverage producers, ingredient producers, companies that produce related items like food packaging, retailers, as well as companies whose products share some

topics with food, like cosmetics. In the annual General Assembly the members elect the Board of Directors, the managing body of the Institute. The Board consists of ten scientists who represent members, and ten scientists from academia and other non-profit research institutes. Assisted by the Scientific Advisory Committee, which is likewise composed of industry and non-industry scientists, the Board reviews proposals for new ILSI Europe activities. The extensive involvement of publicly funded scientists in ILSI Europe ensures the scientific quality, balance and transparency of its programme.

Current activities are in the areas of nutrition, food safety, risk and benefit assessment, the relationship between diet, health and disease as well as consumer science. The output of these activities, presently over 150 scientific publications, is the combined effort of members' scientists and of leading academic researchers assisted by the ILSI staff. Extensively peer-reviewed before publication, the work is widely regarded as highly authoritative.

A prime example of the work of ILSI Europe is the way it facilitated the building of a solid scientific foundation to support the European regulation of nutrition and health claims on food. From 1995 to 2005 the projects FUFOSSE and PASSCLAIM, both funded by the European Commission's DG Research and coordinated by ILSI Europe, brought together hundreds of leading European scientists from academia, government, industry, consumer organisations and other stakeholders. Their review of the relationship between diet and health culminated in the PASSCLAIM criteria for scientific substantiation of claims that emphasise the need for evidence of a benefit in humans, provide guidance for the design of intervention studies and the characterisation of the functional food, and recognise the usefulness of valid markers. In addition to this seminal work on claim substantiation, which is an excellent example of the combination of public and private funding to advance public health, ILSI Europe has organised timely workshops on the related topics of nutrient profiling and consumer understanding of health claims. The publications resulting from this work are freely available on our website (www.ilsieurope.eu).