

PRESS RELEASE

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AACC Approves New Dietary Fiber Definition

St. Paul, MN (June 1, 2000) In the 25 plus years since the original definition of dietary fiber was developed by nutrition researcher H. Trowell and his associates, knowledge of dietary fiber chemistry, structure, and function has grown substantially. Consequently, questions have been raised, both in the scientific community and elsewhere, regarding the definition.

In the fall of 1998, the American Association of Cereal Chemists (AACC) inaugurated an effort to concisely define dietary fiber by holding a series of scientific discussions. An ad hoc committee was formed to assess the current definition of dietary fiber and if appropriate, to modify and update that definition. "AACC members have a particular expertise in this area and we therefore felt it was incumbent upon us to play a leading role in this redefinition," states Julie Miller Jones, AACC President. "But it was truly a collaborative effort and AACC is grateful to the hundreds of people who gave their time and experience to this issue."

In June 1999, a joint workshop was held between AACC and the North American branch of the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI N.A.) to solicit input from key professionals. Meetings were also sponsored at the Institute of Food Technologist's annual meeting in July 1999 and one at the AACC annual meeting in November 1999. Definitions were also posted on AACC's website and those interested were invited to comment.

A consensus definition was developed and on June 1, 2000, the AACC Board of Directors approved the following definition for dietary fiber:

Dietary fiber is the edible parts of plants or analogous carbohydrates that are resistant to digestion and absorption in the human small intestine with complete or partial fermentation in the large intestine. Dietary fiber includes polysaccharides, oligosaccharides, lignin, and associated plant substances. Dietary fibers promote beneficial physiological effects including laxation, and/or blood cholesterol attenuation, and/or blood glucose attenuation.

Dennis Gordon, Chair of the AACC Committee to Define Dietary Fiber, adds "There were several complex issues that needed to be discussed and resolved before reaching a definition that satisfied the majority of those involved. We think the result is a definition that incorporates recent discoveries that have been made in this field while providing a framework for those aspects that remain to be clearly delineated by research."

Jones states, "This is perhaps one of the most important food issues of the decade. The established, as well as the yet undiscovered health benefits of dietary fiber make this a critical issue on several levels — affecting public health and the future design of and research into dietary fiber, and possibly even a future definition for functional foods. Plans are to make the definition available to scientific and regulatory groups in the hope that it will help facilitate the advancement of current practices and methods regarding this important food component."

The American Association of Cereal Chemists is a member-driven organization of nearly 4,000 professionals focused on advancing grain based food products worldwide though its commitment to cereal science and related technologies.