

## « LATIN-AMERICAN F&V AND CUISINE: LIFE RESOURCE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE »

### Editorial

Of all nutritional recommendations, one stands out. It is certain that practically all populations, communities, families and people, will improve their health and well-being, and be protected against obesity and serious chronic diseases, by consuming much more fresh and minimally processed vegetables and fruits. 'Five a day', while well above almost any country's average, is a modest goal.

In this series of excellent articles, Enrique Jacoby explains why education and information programmes are an essential part of successful campaigns to increase consumption of vegetables and fruits. But by themselves such programmes cannot succeed. By analogy, no village schoolteacher could become president of her country if she had no backing from any political party, and practically no campaign funding. The amount of money spent by transnational and other giant industries to promote their fatty, sugary or salty ultra-processed products, may be a hundred or five hundred times that spent on health promotion programmes.

The way ahead is shown by a statement first agreed in 2008 at the inaugural meeting of the Public Health Foundation of India in Hyderabad, and continually confirmed since that time. Here it is: All significant improvements in public health involve the use of law. This is a rule to which there is no exception.

Obesity, and diabetes and other serious chronic diseases, are now pandemic and out of control. Law is used to control or restrict driving, handguns, and smoking, and to protect infirm people, open spaces, and threatened species. Governments must now govern in the public interest, and use public money to improve public health. Part of this task is to make the production of vegetables and fruits more attractive, and to make them more available, accessible and affordable. This done, information and education programmes will work.

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# Brazilian food policies for fruits and vegetables: a nation-state strategy

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## Brazilian fruits and vegetables for Brazilians

Brazil is among the major exporters of fresh fruits in the world<sup>1</sup>, however Brazilians still consume less than one third<sup>2</sup> out of the minimum daily 400g of fruits and vegetables (F&V) recommended by the World Health Organization<sup>3</sup>. This paradox is one of the several challenges to promote the consumption of F&V in the country, which relate to the food system as a whole.

Organic F&V, for instance, are considered luxury products as they are still very expensive. Traditional F&V from the Amazon and other Brazilian biomes are more rare and expensive in some Brazilian cities than in Europe. The production is still focused on the export market and this indicates there is a pressing need to develop policies that favour the inner consumption<sup>4</sup>.

## Promoting the right to fruits and vegetables

The promotion of F&V cannot be restricted to a marketing campaign focused solely on consumption; it requires comprehensive actions based on wider perspectives such as the food and nutrition security and the human right to a healthy and adequate supply of food. Following these perspectives, this paper derives from an analysis convened by the National Cancer Institute of Brazil in 2009-2010 that looked at actions directly or indirectly related to the production, supply and/or promotion of F&V that have been developed by several government sectors.

## Beyond education and campaigns

By analysing the proposals that have emerged from several political forums along the last 10 years, and the proposals implemented by the federal government, it is possible to identify the advances regarding the promotion of F&V in Brazil. Beforehand, it is noteworthy that these actions must go far beyond campaigning, they require structuring actions and the combination of different institutional mechanisms to foster and give support to a more comprehensive, integrative and systemic approach.

The recent and increasing democratisation of decision-taking forums and social participation in Brazil have been decisive on

influencing and promoting social changes. Over time, the articulation between the civil society and social movements with the government in Brazil has been strengthened. Some strategic forums for establishing social pacts have been consolidated such as the National Council of Food and Nutrition Security and the National Council of Health, from where it emerged proposals that have resonated in public policies related to F&V.

It is also essential to have a legal background to protect public interests and fundamental rights. To cite some, in 2006, the Brazilian Law of Food and Nutrition Security was approved. This widened the political scope of actions, indicating that the promotion of foods such as fresh F&V must be associated to the transition to new models of production and supply that ensure not only sanitary and nutritional quality, but also environmental, social and economic sustainability, as well as the respect to cultural diversity<sup>5</sup>. Another federal law, from 2009, also stipulates that 70% of the budget for school meals - amounting in 2012 to an annual \$US 1,6 billion for 41 million children - be spent on fresh F&V, and other minimally processed foods. It further requires that of this budget, at least 30 per cent should be locally sourced from cooperatives and family farms<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, several proposals of law are progressing within the Brazilian congress and senate to regulate the advertisement of products that compete with F&V, such as junk foods.

## A State-nation strategy

To achieve a wide and sustained State-nation strategy to promote F&V, there are other actions in place in Brazil, besides the few cited here. The process to make them more comprehensive, articulated, and systemic includes: establishing a legal framework to ensure human rights; promoting social participation and political agreements through national councils; fostering programmes designed to promote new models of production articulated with education; and converging actions that affect production, supply, availability, affordability and consumption to reach, through strategic settings (e.g. schools, workplaces), different population groups.



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# Eat tasty, eat healthy, eat Peruvian<sup>1</sup>... and let's start working on that

— Enrique Jacoby —

Regional Advisor of Healthy Eating, PAHO/WHO

During the last decade, Peru's traditional cuisine, with its nearly magical and successful fusion of Andean, Spanish, Italian, Chinese and Japanese traditions, and its numerous reinterpretations, has gained global recognition, making several celebrity chefs, among them Ferran Adria, stop, try it and roll their eyes with a resounding "Hmmm!"

This eruption of Peruvian food on the global stage has been brewing during the last two decades, concocted by a new cohort of adventurous chefs that took Peruvian culinary to prominence. Without question, however, the mother of those fusion exercises can be traced five-hundred years back when Spanish conquerors were introduced to an almost infinite array of new foods (such as potatoes, peanuts, beans, corn, chili peppers, quinoa, and unknown fish) as part of the local Andean culinary delights. In the ensuing five centuries, Andean, Iberian and Arab cooking traditions amalgamated into what was later known as Peruvian food.

## The food and economic boom

The Peruvian cuisine boom has serious economic figures attached to it. The hotel and restaurant industry has grown from 3.9% to 7.6% of GDP between 2000 and 2006, and employment in restaurants and bars grew a staggering 39% from 2001 to 2004<sup>2</sup>. Tourism figures are in the same track, and a growing number of tourists are now opting for gastronomic tours instead of the typical trip to the Machu Picchu ruins in Cusco. Peruvian food abroad is also making big strides. Cities like Barcelona, Madrid, San Francisco, New York, Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires today host top notch Peruvian restaurants that compete with the best in town.

Culinary matters are a top daily priority to most Peruvians who remain loyal to their *sabor nacional* (the national taste). Peruvian anthropologist and chef, Mariano Valderrama<sup>2</sup>, forecast the "boom" will have a far reaching impact to positively influence the quality of home and street food. It will also add value to the country's food supply chain, creating a greater demand for a myriad of traditional foods, and culinary ingredients.



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## NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Translation from the original in Spanish: "Come rico, come sano, come peruano"

2. Valderrama M. El Boom de la Cocina Peruana <http://www.rimisp.org/FCKeditor/UserFiles/File/documentos/docs/pdf/DTR-IC/elboomdelacocinaperuana.pdf>

3. UPP include soft drinks, and ready-to-eat savoury or sweet snacks, or

## Food traditions and health

The Peruvian Ministry of Health's slogan "Eat tasty, eat healthy, eat Peruvian"<sup>1</sup> was certainly inspired by the current culinary boom and its force to inspire social change. In fact, the Ministry of Health came up with the slogan last year after identifying that Peruvian food has valuable characteristics. Firstly, the fact that a wide variety of natural (whole) foods are the basic ingredients of traditional dishes loaded with superb taste. In addition, Peruvian food is based on the use of local grown food and also an intense regional exchange; implies an active participation of individuals in food preparation; and also favors commensality, i.e. sharing food around a meal which has a symbolic and cultural dimension.

On top of all that, Peruvian cuisine has also stood the test of time as it has nurtured and nourished several dozens of generations of Peruvians. Quite an accomplishment when compared to the wreck of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer left by the Western Diet (a.k.a. junk food) in the last two generations.

The idea of taking traditional foods as a guide to healthy eating is not new. The Mediterranean and Japanese food traditions, after being meticulously studied, have turned into global examples of healthy eating. Not all food cultures have received similar scientific scrutiny, but without a doubt all have stood the test of time that runs well over millennia. What most, if not all, of them seem incapable of achieving on their own, is to withstand the market muscle of ultra-processed products (UPP)<sup>3,4</sup> industries. These have gained significant influence on agriculture priorities, trade and government subsidies under the mantra of quantity over quality, and sell convenience by leaving cooking behind. They employ multi-billion dollar marketing budgets to infuse in their products an image of coolness and health.

## Conclusion

A country's food traditions offer a wonderful platform and provides a profound connection between the planet, food, people and cultural identity. Nonetheless, in places where globalized industrial food markets are making significant inroads, it is unlikely that the promotion of healthy eating per se will make serious progress unless it is coupled with the creation of an infrastructure of healthy eating. This means, resisting the invasion of UPP, regulating food marketing, and creating the incentives to make whole food agriculture and allied markets, flourish and grow strong.

# Fruit and Vegetable promotion in children of a Caracas Daycare by students enrolled in Community Service of the Faculty of Science of “Universidad Central de Venezuela”

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## Venezuela: a country with opportunities for launching F&V promotional programs

The growing epidemic of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) related to changes in eating habits and unhealthy lifestyles, and the fact that chronic diseases are also among the leading causes of mortality in Venezuela, provided motivation to launch the “5 a Day” initiative from Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV). Fruit and Vegetables (F&V) have not had a significant presence in Venezuelan official health programs or in policies for prevention of NCD, even if recommended by food guides. With an alarming increase of overweight and obesity in children, Venezuela has multiple opportunities for launching F&V promotional programs<sup>1</sup>. UCV has been trying to disseminate the campaign and gain support from other institutions and sectors of society interested in increasing the awareness of the health benefits associated with the consumption of F&V and increased physical activity.

## The Venezuelan Law of Community Service for Students of Higher Education

This process has been assisted by a unique opportunity provided by the legal framework of the Law of Community Service for Students of Higher Education that was enacted in 2005. Given this timely situation, the project “5 a Day educational campaigns in the context of the Community Service Guidelines of the Faculty of Sciences at UCV” was initiated. This represents a formidable chance to permeate public schools with educational and entertaining activities regarding F&V, employing the driving force of committed students who have previously being instructed in the WHO/FAO joint Initiative to promote fruit and vegetables for health worldwide<sup>2</sup>.

## Intervention in a Daycare institution for children of UCV's employees “Maternal Negra Matea”: An example of what Community Service students do

In this work are presented the results of a short intervention (March-June 2009), performed by two undergraduate students of UCV. The intervention took place in a Daycare institution for children of UCV's employees “Maternal Negra Matea”. It included a sample of 58 children of both sexes: infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers, categorized in four groups. Their parents and 18 workers of the Center were also included in final activities.

The intervention was conducted in four stages:

I: **Evaluation of the children's initial knowledge of F&V** (recognition and identification) using color images.

II: **Group dynamics activities geared to reinforce knowledge of F&V** (nursery rhymes, exercise and dances, puppet/story theatre with F&V costumes). Children participated in supervised feeding of two tortoises – pets belonging to the Daycare – with leafy vegetables. All activities were adapted to the ages of the sample.

III: **Verification of F&V preferences.** A mini-market was implemented in the Daycare where children could make a selection and “buy” F&V of their preference. Their selection was recorded. In subsequent activities, a tasting of 12 fruits and 10 vegetables was conducted under the guidance of the dietitian of the nursery.

IV: **F&V Fair.** The same F&V presented to the children were presented to their parents and staff (also with children at the Daycare) in a final activity. Their response was recorded. Additionally, parents were presented with “5 a Day” report cards with results and scores of their children throughout the

activities undertaken during the term, and received a motivational talk on the benefits of F&V consumption.

The relationship between knowledge of F&V (initial and after the intervention) was determined. Many F&V initially presented to the children were unknown to them, and after the intervention their knowledge increased 6-13% for vegetables and 10-35% for fruits (Figure 1). Children were able to recognize a greater number of fruits (45%) as opposed to vegetables (27%).

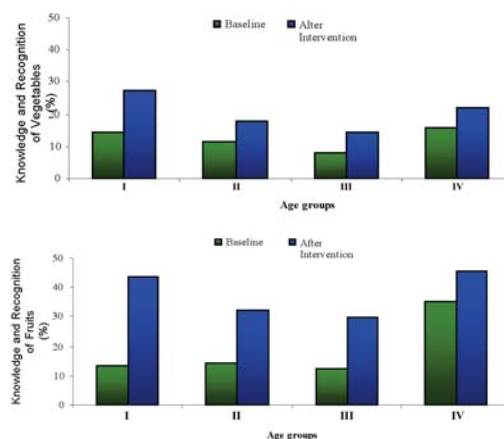


Figure 1. Change in knowledge and recognition of Vegetables (a) and Fruits (b) in 4 age groups: I (9 children aged 10-14 months), II (13 children aged 15-22 months), III (16 children aged 2 year/2 months - 2 year/8 months), and IV (20 children aged 2 year/9 months-3 year/5months), during the period March-June 2009 in Daycare “Negra Matea” (N = 58, p < 0.05).

The correlation between knowledge and F&V preference was not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) in Groups I and II, while groups III and IV were willing to try and eat mostly F&V that they knew and recognized ( $p < 0.05$ ). This agrees with Busick et al.<sup>3</sup>, who reported a weak correlation between the child's ability to name the F&V and its willingness to try them. The acceptance of food in preschool children is often considered a basic preference behavior highly correlated with unrestricted consumption, establishing a measure of what children are willing to eat if they are offered: when children are offered to try new flavors repeatedly without coercion, they learn to accept new foods that had previously been rejected<sup>4</sup>.

Results were compared with those reported by parents and staff on taste and preference in the F&V Fair. A weak relationship between the groups, parents and staff, was observed indicating that the disposition of children to test the different F&V was poorly correlated with the tastes of the adult population that interacts with them ( $p > 0.05$ ). This needs to be further investigated since the F&V Fair was the sole event where this was measured. However, adult's awareness of the importance of F&V was perceived.



Figure 2. Images of activities conducted in Daycare “Negra Matea” during the term March-June 2009 to promote Fruit and Vegetables consumption.

**Community Service:** Good opportunity. These types of interventions continue with good perspectives even if they cover only short-term activities.

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# Campaign in Colombia "5 a day"

Colombia President "5 al día": **Adriana Senior Mojica**  
"5 al día Colombia" Team: **William Lizarazo, Natalia Vásquez**

The Millennium Declaration, promulgated by the United Nations in 2000, is the first worldwide agreement, together with a political global commitment, focused on taking care of the poorest populations in the world. It is a social pact based on the co-responsibility of developed countries and developing countries aimed at reducing poverty, improving worldwide health, and promoting peace, human rights and sustainable development.

To achieve this objective, we need to coordinate the strategies promoting and encouraging fruit and vegetable consumption, among others, since this supports the creation of healthy environments and the improvement of living conditions. The 5 a day Colombia program has implemented regional initiatives, for creating healthy schools, healthy universities, healthy housing, healthy homes, and healthy public areas. These initiatives have been supported by the health ministry, the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization, (PAHO/WHO). Through coordinated efforts, the supporting organizations are working towards improving the access and availability of fruit and vegetables, and increasing the consumption of these products by children, young people,

families and communities.

It is important to note that there has been some success regionally and socially in developing strategies to create healthy environments in the last five years. Now the challenge is to generalize the benefits on a national level, with the participation and commitment of the different sectors engaged in human and social development of this country.

This initiative has been promoted by the Corporación Colombia Internacional – CCI. This organization that has been working for 20 years to support farmers and, since 2007, to promote fruit and vegetable consumption through the 5 a day campaign, motivated by the current low consumption in the country (only 190 grams a day).

The CCI, which promotes fruit and vegetables, made its priority to increase consumption, so that farmers could be guaranteed to sell their products, and to promote healthy eating habits, in order to reduce risks of malnutrition, obesity problems and diseases in general.



## VIII World congress consumption fruit and vegetables

The International congress of Fruits and Vegetables consumption has been held every year since 2005. It was held in Madrid, Spain, in October 2011, where it was decided that the next event would be held in Cali, Columbia, from 27-28 September 2012. Corporación Colombia Internacional will organize and host the congress along with the Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social, as part of the Week of Healthy

Lifestyles and Habits. This event is expected to host at least 40 countries.

This event aims to reinforce worldwide campaigns to increase fruit and vegetable consumption ("5 a day"), is supported by entities like FAO, WHO, PAHO, and is intended to prevent chronic noncommunicable diseases.

