

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL YALE SYMPOSIUM ON OLIVE OIL & HEALTH

Statement Adopted in Oliveira do Hospital (Portugal)

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently released updated guidelines with the aim of defining “healthy diets” (available at: www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240073654) [1]. Within these guidelines, the following questionable sentence demands further discussion and consideration: **“WHO reaffirms that adults should limit total fat intake to 30% of total energy intake or less”. As already pointed out by experts from the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, most recommendations are well-supported, but guidance on total fat intake omits decades of scientific evidence.**

Recognizing these developments, experts from **the scientific community participating in the 5th International Yale Symposium on Olive Oil and Health** – held in Portugal from December 11th to 13th – felt compelled to draft this letter to the World Health Organization, European Commission, European Parliament, European Food Security Agency, and all the Euro-mediterranean Governments and Ministries of Agriculture and Health, in order to **point out that the misguided statement adopted by WHO concerning the total intake of fatty acids is detrimental to the Mediterranean Diet, whose benefits for human health have been widely documented in medical literature the last five decades** [2,3]. This recently released WHO statement erases all the efforts that our scientific community has contributed over the last few decades towards the promotion of the evidence-based nutritional model known as the Mediterranean Diet and at the same time ultimately can lead to negative consequences for population Health, Economy, Culture and Environment of Euro-Mediterranean region.

In fact, **the newly released WHO dietary guidelines have been widely perceived as indicating that total fat should be reduced.** However, the term “total fat” used in WHO guidelines is not a specific term because it does not discriminate between olive oil and other fats (both derived from animals and vegetables). Actually, fats and oils are distinct categories belonging to the same broad group of lipids, and olive oil itself represents a distinguished class among the oils. For people living in Southern Europe, “fat” means mainly olive oil; for those living in Northern and Central Europe, the word “fat” is associated with animal fat. **The generic WHO recommendation concerning fat intake reduction may result in the reduction of olive-oil consumption in Southern Europe and the concomitant reduction of vegetables and legumes weekly intake,** while scientific evidence has repeatedly and overwhelmingly showed that the antioxidant compounds present in olive oil and vegetables are endowed with several beneficial biologic activities [2,3].

A consensus report carried out in Spain by 8 scientific societies related to nutrition, endocrinology, internal medicine and other medical branches in year 2015 (available at: https://www.fesnad.org/resources/files/Publicaciones/Consenso_sobre_las_grasas_y_aceites_2015.pdf) has demonstrated that a typical Mediterranean diet could present up to 35% of the total energy provided by dietary fats, which mainly consists of olive oil, but its consumption did not contribute to body weight increase.

On this basis, we ask for the revision of the above-mentioned statement contained in the newly released WHO guidelines, increasing the total fat intake at least up to 35% & to differentiate the “fats” from “oils” and olive oil from other vegetable oils when referring to “type of fat consumed”.

References

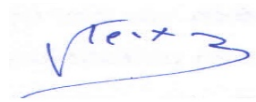
1. World Health Organization, Total Fat Intake for the Prevention of Unhealthy Weight Gain in Adults and Children [Internet], WHO Guideline, Geneva, 2023 [date updated 17 July 2023; date cited 17 December 2023]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240073654>.
2. Ludwig D. et al. Low-Fat Diet Redux at WHO, The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 2023 Nov; 118(5):849-851
3. Zupo R, et al. Scientific evidence supporting the newly developed one-health labeling tool “Med-Index”: an umbrella systematic review on health benefits of mediterranean diet principles and adherence in a planeterranean perspective. J Transl Med. 2023 Oct 26;21(1):755.

Members of Scientific Community Signatories to Statement

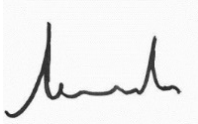
Present at 5th International Yale Symposium on Olive Oil and Health



Prof. Vasilis Vasiliou
Yale School of Public Health (USA)



Prof. Antonia Trichopoulou
Member of the Academy of Athens (Greece)



Prof. Tassos C. Kyriakides
Yale School of Public Health (USA)



Prof. Alessandro Leone
University of Bari Aldo Moro (Italy)



Prof. Prisco Piscitelli
Italian Society of Environmental Medicine (Italy)



Dr. Joao Nunes
Campus de Tecnologia e Inovacao (Portugal)

CASTELLANO
OROZCO JOSE MARIA
- DNI 28532866D

Firmado digitalmente por
CASTELLANO OROZCO JOSE
MARIA - DNI 28532866D
Fecha: 2023.12.21 08:43:04
+01'00'

Dr. Josè Maria Castellano
Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas (Spain)



Jaime Lillo
International Olive Council (IOC)



Francesca Rocchi
Vice Presidente
Educazione Mense Consiglio del Cibo Multi
Slow Food Roma (Italy)