

# The dairy matrix: a new approach to understanding the health effects of food

press release



## Milk Nutritious by Nature<sup>1</sup> Symposia

October 2017

### The health effects of food are more than the sum of its nutrients

The Hague (October 3), Copenhagen (October 4),  
Brussels (October 11), Belfast (October 30), Dublin (November 1)

For the fourth time, the European Milk Forum<sup>2</sup> (EMF) organized a European scientific symposia tour: this unique program takes place in five of the EMF's member countries and is part of the «Milk, Nutritious by Nature»<sup>1</sup> information initiative.

With growing recognition that dietary guidance should be based on evaluation of the health impact of whole foods rather than on the individual nutrients they contain, more than 400 professionals met during the EMF European scientific tour to hear the latest developments in nutritional research<sup>3</sup> and explore further the 'food matrix' effects.

Hosted by the European Milk Forum's members (EMF), those scientific symposia brought together global experts and local professionals working in the fields of food, nutrition and health to explore how the unique combination of nutrients and bioactive factors in milk and dairy foods interact with each other in the 'dairy matrix' to produce the overall effect on health.

Speakers at the symposium included Prof Ian Givens (University of Reading), Dr Michelle McKinley (Queen's University Belfast) or Dr Emma Feeney (University College Dublin) and Prof Arne Astrup (University of Copenhagen), who gave guests a greater insight into the 'food matrix' and highlighted that the effects of milk and dairy foods on health extends beyond the individual nutrients they contain.

Prof Ian Givens commented "The 'food matrix' describes a food in terms of both its structure and its nutrient content, and how these interact together. Foods consist of many different nutrients that are contained in a complex physical and chemical structure. But when we eat, we do not consume individual nutrients. We eat the whole food. Either alone or together with other foods in a meal. It therefore seems obvious that we should assess food products in context. And when we do that it becomes clear why the actual effects of a food are not always those expected on the basis of its nutrition content."

Pr Arne Astrup concluded "We have looked at dairy products, and how the complex mixture of nutrients and bioactive substances, such as minerals and vitamins, can affect digestion and ultimately change the overall nutritional and health properties of a particular food. We concluded, among other things, that dairy foods have a different and more beneficial effect on bone health, body weight and the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases (CVD), than would be expected solely on the basis of their nutritional content. Cheese is a good example, despite its saturated fat and salt content, the majority of studies report that cheese consumption does not increase the risk of CVD and may, in fact, be beneficial."

The symposia provided a great opportunity for local nutrition and health professionals, academics and policy makers to discuss the most up to date research in this field of study with the world's leading experts. Based around the expertise of four European scientists, this tour presented the findings of research to date are highly important, particularly to informing public health policy.

Additional research is underway to further investigate the health effects of the dairy matrix and to unravel the mechanisms and pathways through which the different components work together.

**Contact:**

Cécile Guthmann : [info@milkforum.org](mailto:info@milkforum.org)

**More information: [www.milknutritiousbynature.eu](http://www.milknutritiousbynature.eu)**

1 "Milk, Nutritious by Nature" is a European information initiative addressing nutrition and health issues. The initiative's objective is to disseminate relevant information and create a dialogue with key stakeholders such as high level scientists, health professionals, policy makers and journalists in relation to the nutrient richness and health impact of milk and dairy products and how those nutrients and other components come together in the dairy matrix to exert their beneficial effects. The aim is to build a clearer understanding of the role of milk and dairy products in a healthy, balanced diet across Europe.

2 Created in 2011, the European Milk Forum is the first pan-European non-profit organisation. EMF comprises dairy organisations in eight countries - Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Northern Ireland (UK), Norway and The Netherlands

3 AJCN. First published ahead of print April 12, 2017 as doi: 10.3945/ajcn.116.151548.