



FOODBALL identifies and validates food biomarkers to improve quality of dietary assessment globally

January 2015

Interview with Professor Edith Feskens (Wageningen UR – Division of Human Nutrition)

Edith Feskens is Project Leader of the EU Food Biomarkers Alliance (FOODBALL), an international project funded by the European Joint Programming Initiative on “Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life” (JPI-HDHL), with the objective to fulfil the urgent need to improve knowledge and use of dietary biomarkers. Out of the 18 projects recommended for funding, 2 projects recently received a total amount of EUR 5.5 mln. Feskens was appointed by the FOODBALL consortium members to be Project Leader, due to her broad vision and knowledge in the field of nutrition, dietary assessment and epidemiology. Her consortium brings together over 20 research groups from 11 European countries and Canada. New Zealand is observer in the project.

Biomarkers covering several foods and food components may provide an object measure of actual intake and status, and provide an important adjunct to current food consumption assessments. However, only a few foods are currently covered by validated intake biomarkers and clear recommendations on biomarkers concerning nutrition and health are lacking.

“We try to bring dietary assessment to a higher level, globally. Biomarkers are very costly and knowledge-intensive. This project, combined with other initiatives within JPI-HDHL, will enable access to 54 human intervention studies on > 14 000 men and women from 8 – 95 years of age, all with biobanks accessible to FOODBALL. This allows us to create a whole new toolbox for dietary assessment. We have already been approached by countries around the world with an interest to make use of our toolbox in the future.”

Through a systematic exploration and validation of biomarkers, the FOODBALL project aims to obtain a good coverage of the food intake in different population groups within Europe, by applying metabolomics to discover biomarkers; exploring use of easier sampling techniques and body fluids; revising the current dietary biomarker classification and developing a validation scoring system; applying these on selected new biomarkers; and exploring biological effects using biomarkers of intake.

“The project will also provide a unique platform for sharing knowledge and resources within and beyond the project. This cooperation has not only resulted in new partnerships internationally, but also at national and local level, for example with the Agrotechnology & Food Sciences Group within Wageningen UR”.

Benefit of the JPI-HDHL

EU projects are known for high levels of red tape and administrative burden for scientists. “Contrary to most EU funded projects under the Horizon 2020 programme, the administrative aspects of this project are actually quite straight-forward, as each partner is dealing directly with their national funding organisation. We are familiar with their funding rules and procedures.” The Joint Programming Secretariat for JPI-HDHL is based at The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMW), in the Hague.

JPI A Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life

JPI HDHL brings together 25 countries with the aim to coordinate research efforts on determinants of diet and physical activity, diet and food production and the prevention of diet-related chronic diseases. The JPI-HDHL Strategic Research Agenda was published in June.



More information: www.healthydietforhealthylife.eu

Joint Programming contact person: Dr Christine Bunthof

Wageningen University and Research Centre | Wageningen International

Droevendaalsesteeg 4 | 6708 PB Wageningen | The Netherlands

T +31 317 480996 | E christine.bunthof@wur.nl

www.jointprogramming.nl