

# Proceedings of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) 20th International Congress of Nutrition<sup>1,2</sup>

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## Introduction

On 15–20 September 2013, the Spanish Society of Nutrition (SEÑ) organized the 20th International Congress of Nutrition (ICN) in Granada, Spain, on behalf of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS). Since its founding >6 decades ago, the IUNS has remained true to the guiding principle of its mission “to promote the advancement of the science of nutrition, research, and development through international cooperation globally.” The ICN is organized every 4 y by a different adhering body and normally in a different region of the world to facilitate more opportunities for young nutrition scientists to share their experience with the international scientific community. Transparent in all actions, the IUNS works in partnerships but places public interests first, and scientists representing the IUNS are involved in different activities of international organizations and agencies of the United Nations System. These are carried out at regional and global levels and include non-communicable disease prevention, food and nutrition surveillance systems, food quality and safety, and monitoring and evaluation of nutrition intervention programs.

To facilitate cooperation with the private sector to sponsor the organization of its scientific events, the IUNS published guidelines, which are binding for fundraising efforts of the host of the ICN ([http://www.unscn.org/files/Publications/SCN\\_News/SCNNEWS39\\_10.01\\_low\\_def.pdf](http://www.unscn.org/files/Publications/SCN_News/SCNNEWS39_10.01_low_def.pdf)). Connections to the private sector are encouraged but chosen carefully, always bearing in mind the independent science-based and credible profile of the IUNS.

Despite a concurrent economic crisis in Spain, the 20th ICN received financial assistance from 63 international agencies and several local institutions. Fifty-two food and nutrition associations and companies sponsored the event, which allowed us to support the participation of young scientists from both developed and developing countries through travel grants. Furthermore, the 20th ICN provided subsidized rates for students and delegates from low- and middle-income countries.

The ICN serves as a global forum for interactions in research and information exchange, and important global topics in nutrition form the basis for substantial parts of the scientific program. Traditionally, the ICN offers a unique global forum where almost all disciplines of nutrition, diet, and health are considered and where results of basic and applied research projects are presented. Also, the ICN provides a recognized platform to discuss research outcomes and views of projects conducted at multinational, regional, and global levels. Indeed, the 20th ICN Congress provided a broad platform to discuss experiences in the fields of nutrition research, human nutritional requirements, the roles of nutrition in the promotion and prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases, and nutrition education, the composition of foods, and the role of bioactive food components on health and well-being in different food cultures. Likewise, food safety and consumer protection and food production and environmental sustainability worldwide were included.

For 2014 we planned a comprehensive Congress under the theme “Joining Cultures through Nutrition” to promote nutrition and healthy lifestyles to people on a sustainable planet. Hence, the 20th ICN offered a modern and attractive Congress, joining different cultures, traditions, and knowledge with respect to new aspects of nutrition research, development, and innovation around the world.

Being conscious of the broad range of professionals working in the different fields of nutritional sciences, the 20th ICN featured a “track” design of audience segmentation by grouping related subthemes and ensuring the inclusion of sessions from scientific knowledge to application.

<sup>1</sup> Published in a supplement to *Advances in Nutrition*. Presented at the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) 20th International Congress of Nutrition (ICN) held in Granada, Spain, 15–20 September 2013. The IUNS and the 20th ICN wish to thank the California Walnut Commission and Mead Johnson Nutrition for generously providing educational grants to support the publication and distribution of proceedings from the 20th ICN. The contents of this supplement are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent official views of the IUNS. The supplement coordinators for this supplement were Angel Gil, Jose Alfredo Martinez, and Ibrahim Elmadfa. The supplement coordinators had no conflicts of interest to disclose.

<sup>2</sup> Author disclosure: A. Gil, no conflict of interest.

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The main tracks were as follows: 1) Advances in Nutrition Research, 2) Nutrition through Life Course, 3) Public Health Nutrition and Environment; 4) Nutrition and Management of Diseases, 5) Nutrients and Nutritional Assessment, 6) Functional Foods and Bioactive Compounds, 7) Food Culture Practices and Nutritional Education, and 8) Agriculture, Food Science, and Safety.

The scientific program included 6 plenary lectures, 32 special lectures, 4 debates, 90 parallel symposia, 38 sponsored symposia, and 16 satellite symposia. A special effort was made to ensure the involvement of speakers and participants from all continents and countries, including nutrition and food specialists in research, academia, and industry, as well as policy makers, with a gender balance and applicability for all societies. During the course of the 6-d 20th ICN, 4352 delegates and >650 internationally renowned nutrition scientists, researchers, and clinicians from >120 countries were actively engaged. In particular, we wish to recognize the importance of the participation of young investigators and nutrition professionals from developing countries.

For the first time, in parallel to the 20th ICN, the Iberoamerican Nutrition Foundation (FINUT), a nonprofit organization set up in February 2011 with trustees from the SEÑ and the IUNS, promoted and organized an exhibition on “Healthy food, nutrition, and lifestyles within a sustainable environment” in collaboration with Parque de las Ciencias, Granada, Spain, entitled “Nutrition, Source of Life.” This project was aimed above all at the general public, who, by means of a simple, attractive, and enjoyable exhibition presentation, could discover fundamental concepts in relation to food to improve their health and enjoy a better quality of life. The FINUT aims to promote knowledge, research, development, and innovation in the area of nutrition and food through international cooperation and to identify and evaluate problems of public interest related to nutrition and food in Iberoamerica. A major goal is to

develop appropriate programs to provide coherent scientific responses to these problems with the collaboration of national and regional governments, universities, other public research centers, and food and nutrition companies.

The response to the proposed scientific program was very encouraging. In addition to the invited plenary and special lectures, we received ~3570 submissions, 96% of which were accepted. Of these, 347 corresponded to invited speeches for parallel symposia and 193 were selected to be presented as oral communications and 3223 as e-posters. The corresponding abstracts were published at the time of the Congress celebration (1).

In addition to the publication of abstracts, we agreed with the ASN to include selected presentations of plenary and special lectures from the ICN meeting in a forthcoming issue of *Advances in Nutrition*. All IUNS 20th ICN meeting attendees will be able to access the proceedings from the journal Web site ([advances.nutrition.org](http://advances.nutrition.org)) upon publication. The present issue of *Advances* contains 10 articles corresponding to plenary and special lectures from the IUNS 20th ICN meeting. In the next issue of *Advances*, we expect to publish ~7 more articles also related to the IUNS 20th ICN.

### Acknowledgments

We thank the invited speakers whose contributions, participation, and interest made this publication possible and for sharing and exchanging knowledge in nutritional sciences for the benefit of the whole world. The sole author had responsibility for all parts of the manuscript.

### Literature Cited

1. Gil A, Martinez JA. Abstracts of the 20th International Congress of Nutrition, Granada, Spain, September 15–20, 2013. *Ann Nutr Metab*. 2013;63 suppl 1:1–1959.