



# Food Composition Table User's Utilization and Needs PortFIR Assessment

Roberto Brazão (✉) | Luísa Oliveira | Andreia Lopes | Paulo Fernandes | M. Graça Dias

Monitoring and Surveillance Unit. Food and Nutrition Department  
National Institute of Health Doutor Ricardo Jorge, IP. Lisbon. Portugal

(✉) [roberto.brazao@insa.min-saude.pt](mailto:roberto.brazao@insa.min-saude.pt)

## Introduction

Food composition tables (FCT) and databases (FCDB) are very important data resources, available to governmental authorities and policy makers, industrial, health and education professionals and consumers, that can contribute to the achievement of health gains through the improvement of knowledge and nutritional status of the population and the promotion of healthy eating.

Therefore, a continuous development and update of these resources, with great focus in their user's needs, should be considered a priority, to ensure more gains in all sectors of nutrition and public health.

In order to define priorities for the development and update of the Portuguese FCT/FCDB (TCA), the PortFIR User's Group (GTU), transversal to the three PortFIR networks, *i.e.* on Food Composition (RPCA); on Food Chemical Contamination (RPCQA); and on Food Microbiological Information (RPIMA), decided to identify and assess the type of utilization and information needs of the Portuguese FCT/FCDB user's, from different sectors.

## Material and Methods

Users Working Group (GTU) of the Portuguese Food Information Resource (PortFIR), established and maintained by National Health Institute Doutor Ricardo Jorge (INSA, I.P.), developed a questionnaire to evaluate the type of use and needs of the users of FCT and FCDB.

The survey was implemented on-line from 15 March to 02 June 2017, using Google Forms, and FCT/FCDB users were invited to participate through direct contact by email and/or through invitations disseminated by professional associations and PortFIR networks partners, in order to reach a larger number of respondents (*e.g.*: Portuguese Association of Nutrition (APN)).

## Results

A participation of 395 people was obtained, 38.2% of which from "Health, clinical, nutrition and dietetics" areas (Fig. 1). 72.9% of the respondents use some FCT or FCDB due to their professional activity (Fig. 2). Excluding 15 respondents, due to lack of consistency in some answers given, 29.7% of the valid respondents indicated that, in the 3 months before the survey, they used "Frequently (at least once a week)" one of these types of tools (Fig. 3), standing out the "Portuguese Food Composition Table" (TCA) with 55% of the answers (Fig. 4).

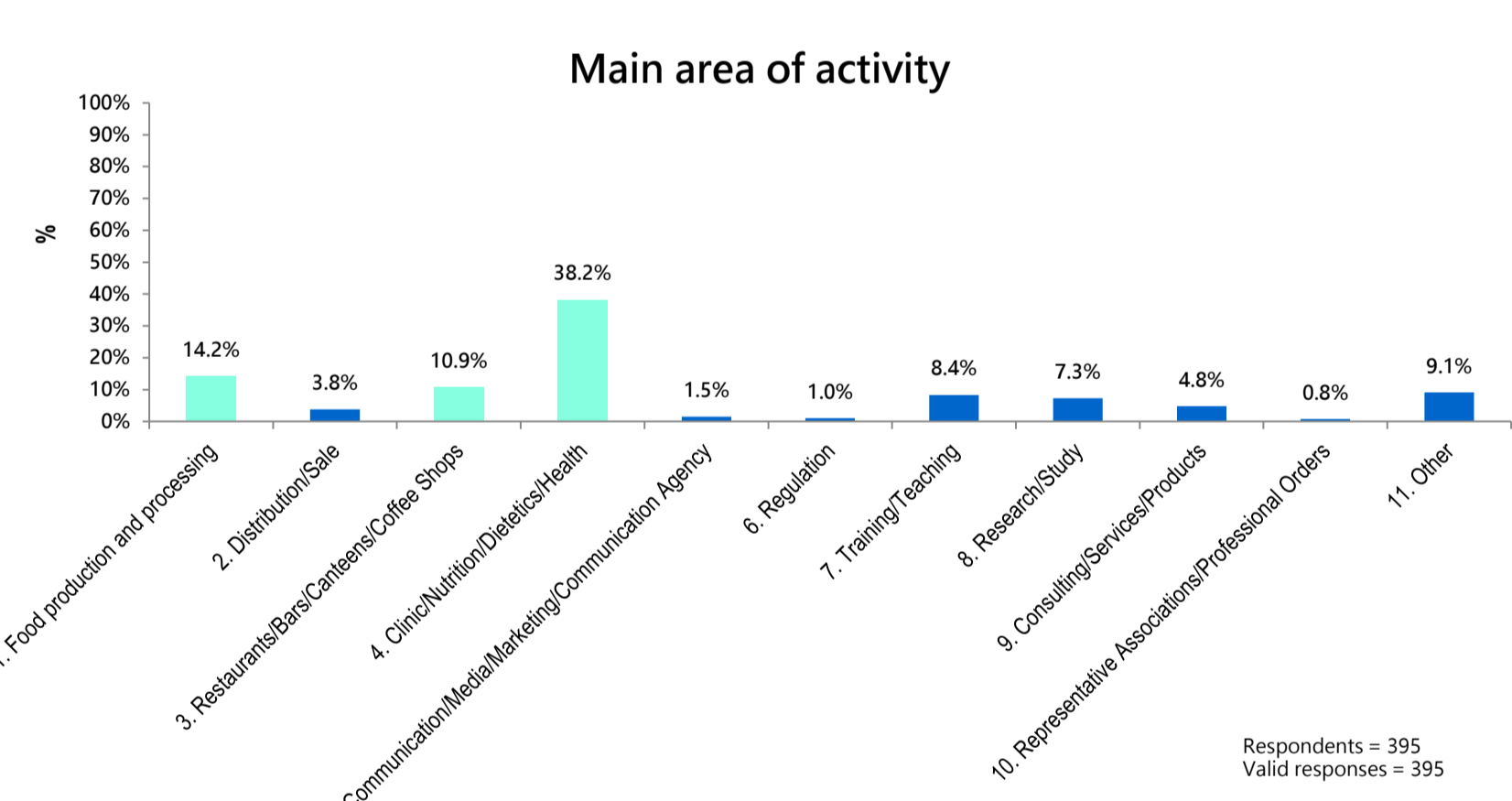


Figure 1: Respondents main area of activity.

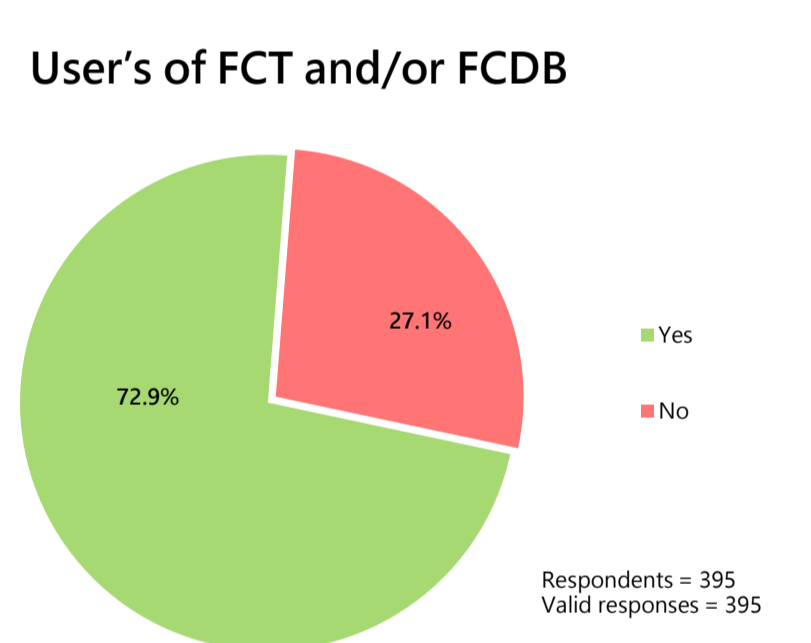


Figure 2: Respondents who use FCT and/or FCDB due to professional activity.

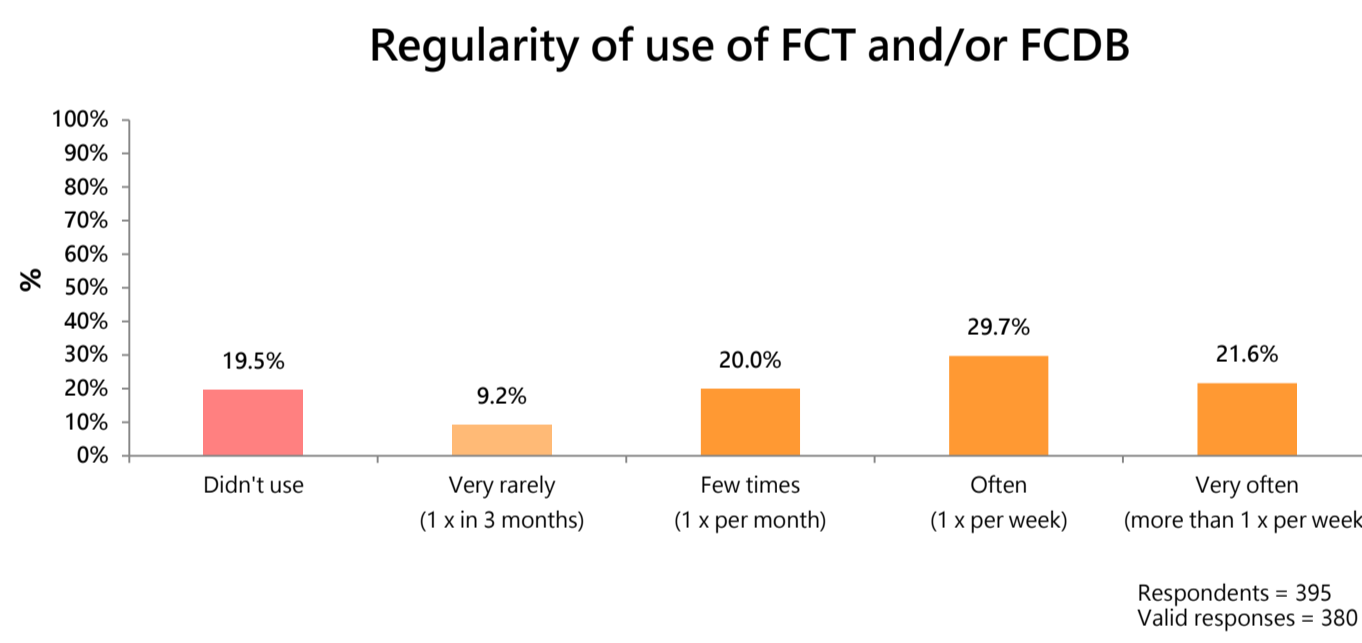


Figure 3: Regularity of use of FCT and/or FCDB in the last 3 months.

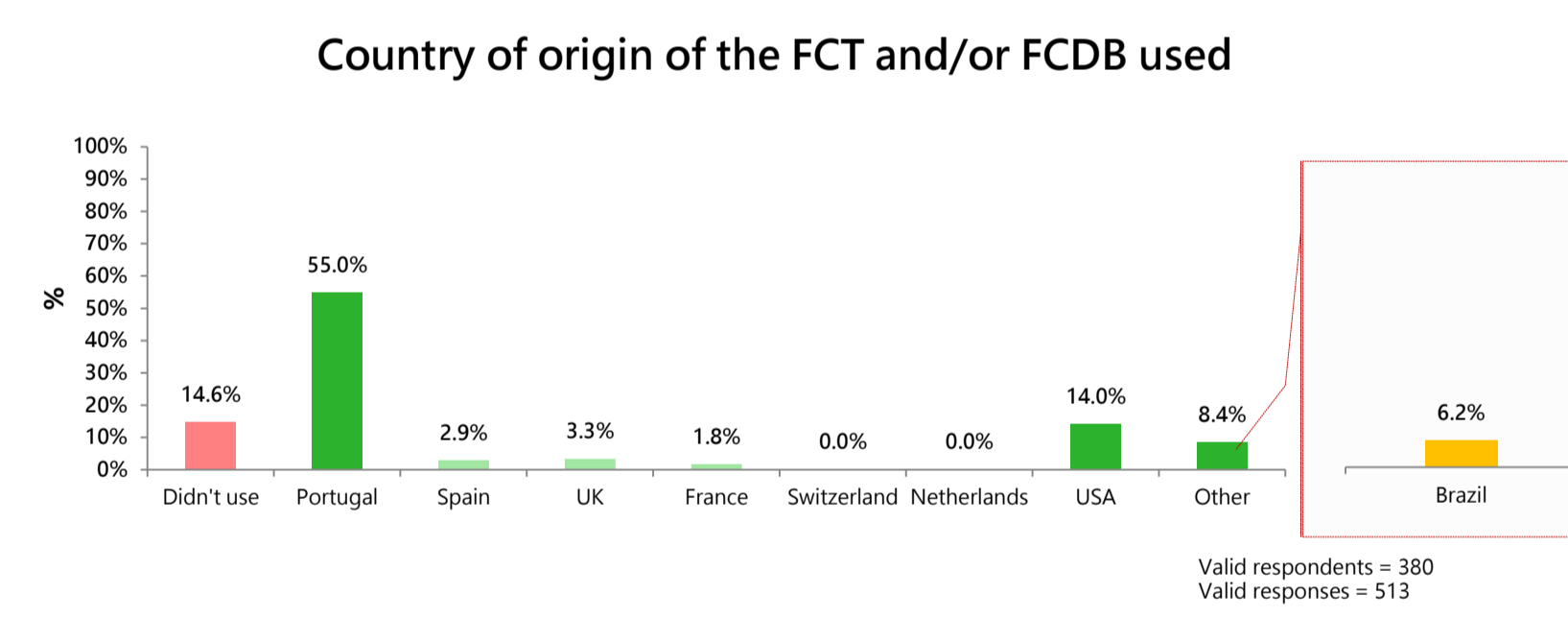


Figure 4: Country of origin of the FCT and/or FCDB used.

In addition, 53.2% of the respondents indicated that "Not always" found the answer they wanted in the TCA: Regarding their needs, for possible future TCA updates, users referred as the top three priorities "Glycemic Index" (28.8%), "Portion" (28.5%) and "pH" (10.1%). Concerning other nutrients (1) and dishes/meals/recipes/food/species/varieties (2) that they wanted to see included in TCA, users indicated as more important, respectively: (1) "omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids" (27.5%), "essential amino acids" (18.9%) and "soluble fibre" (16.0%); and (2) "Traditional Portuguese dishes" (15.5%), "Cereals and pseudocereals" (11.2%) and "Vegetarian dishes" (10.1%).

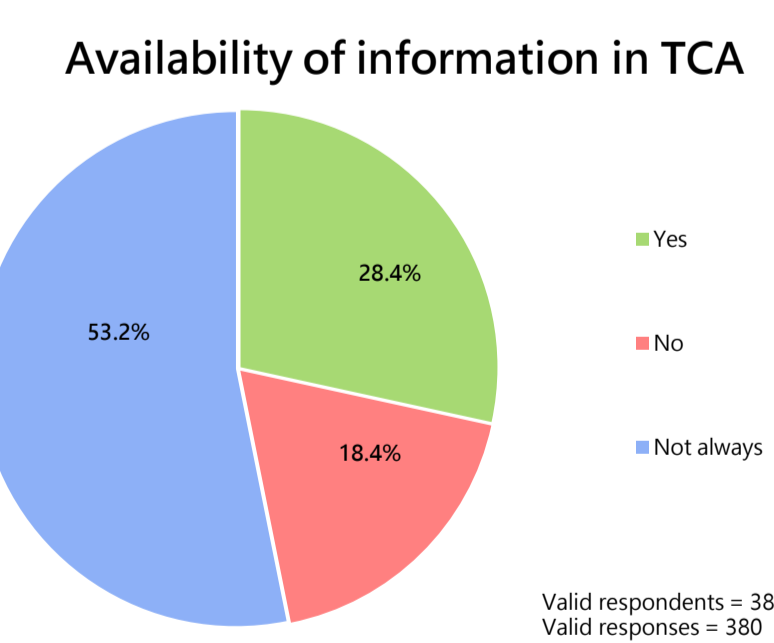


Figure 5: Respondents who indicated that they have found, not always found or not found at all some information at TCA.

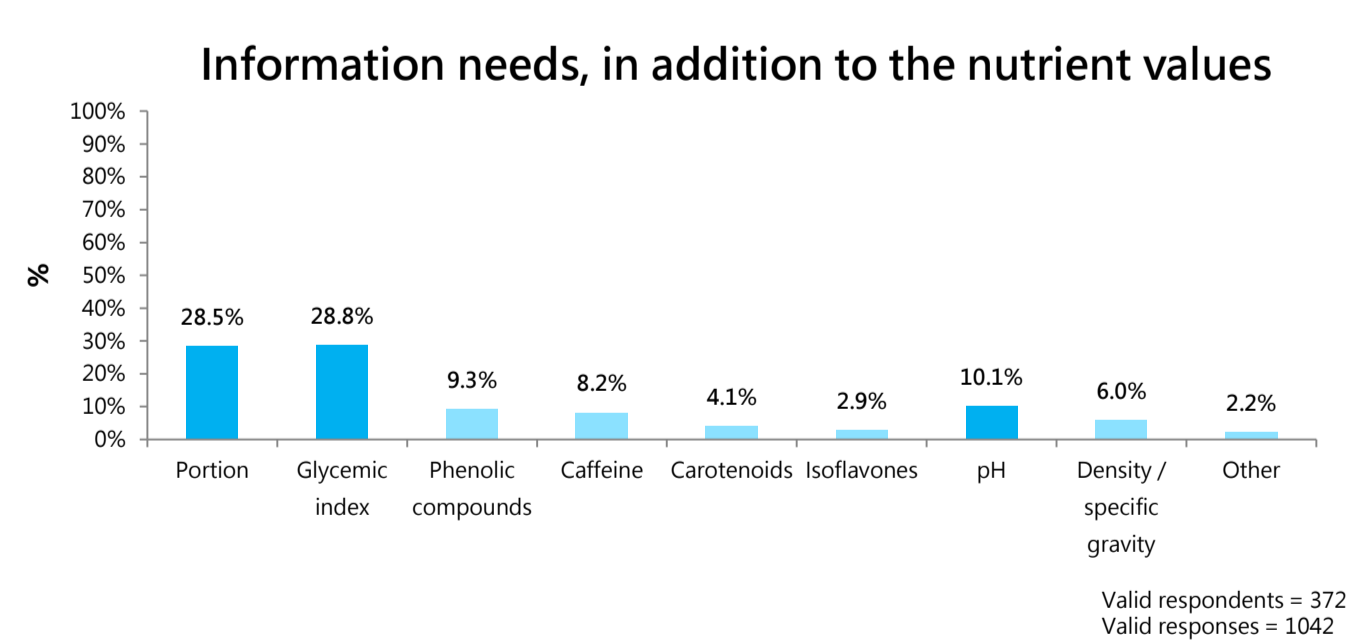


Figure 6: Respondents needs for additional information, in addition to the nutrient values per food, to be made available in TCA (Percentage of the total number of valid responses recorded).

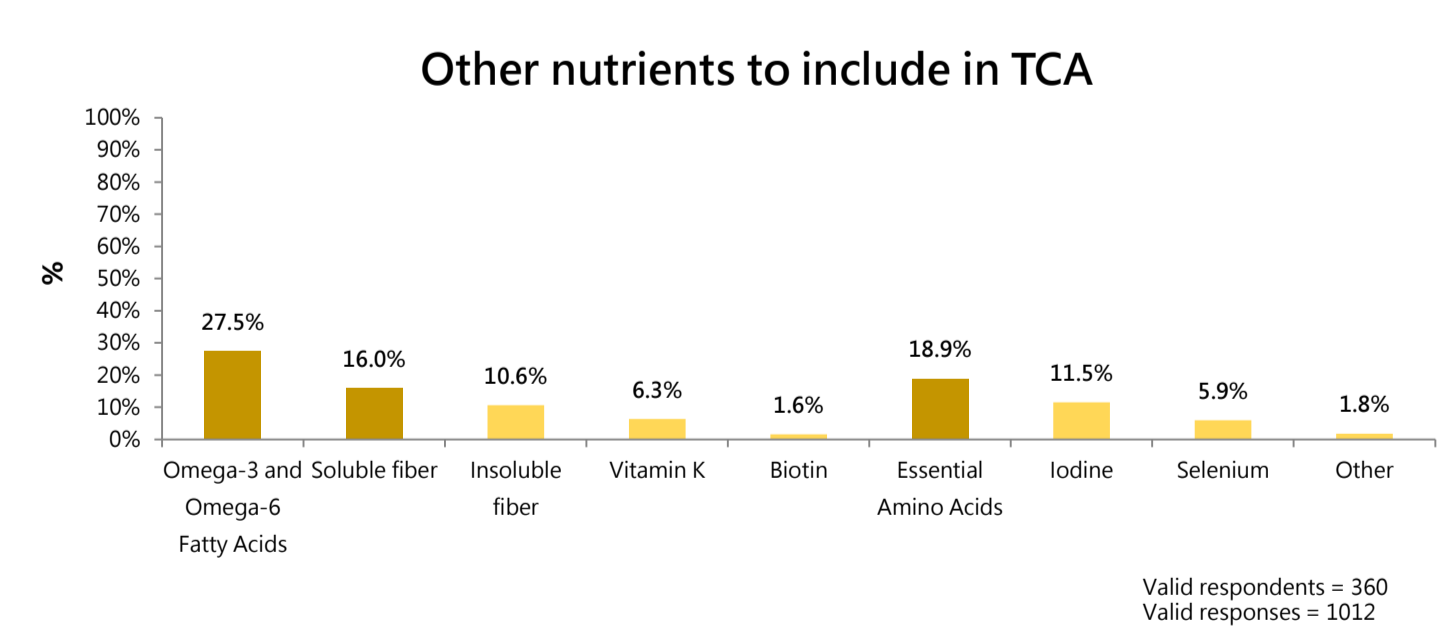


Figure 7: Respondents needs for other nutrients to include in TCA. (Percentage of the total number of valid responses recorded).

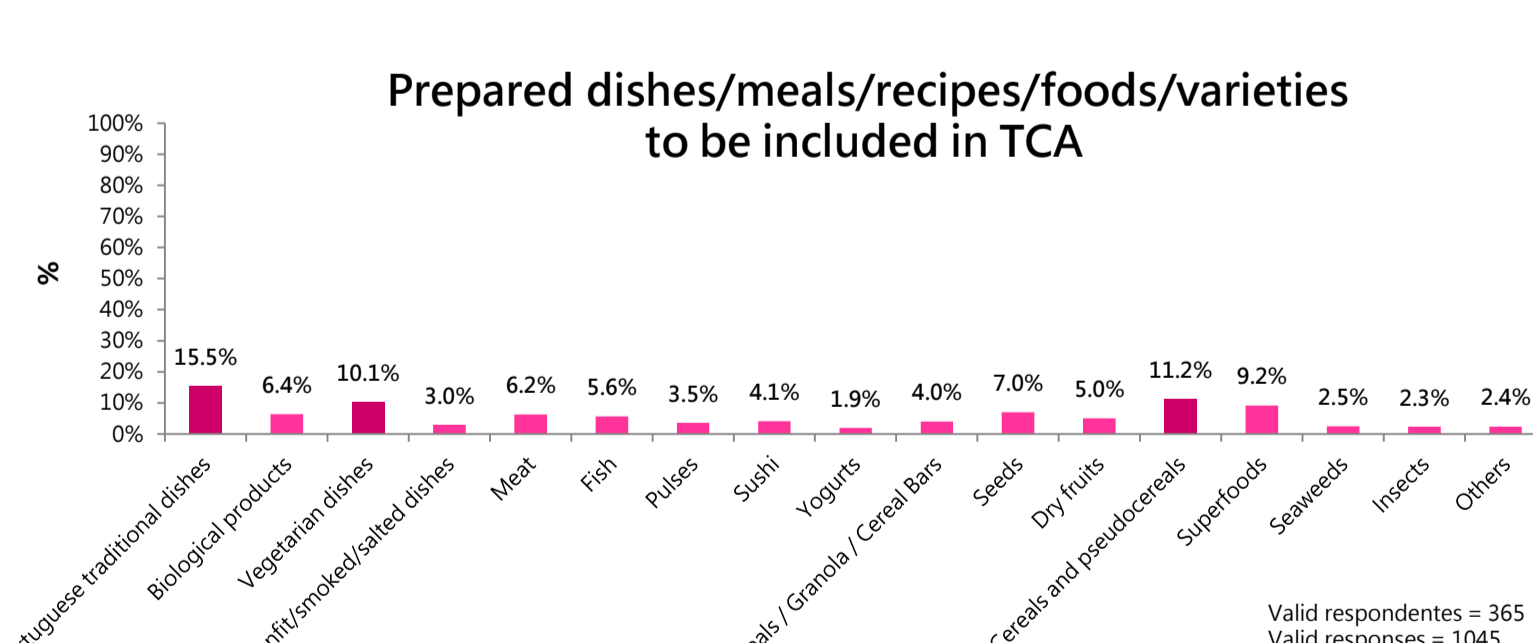


Figure 7: Respondents needs of prepared dishes/meals/recipes/food/species/varieties to be included in the TCA. (Percentage of the total number of valid responses recorded).

## Conclusions

The survey results show that FCT/FCDB play an essential role in most food and nutrition related activities. Half of the total respondents indicated that they use these resources one or more times a week, with TCA being the main source of data for them (55%). However, 53.2% of TCA user's referred that "not always" have found the information they needed.

An intensive and thoroughly work is needed in the development, update and sustainable maintenance of these resources, to ensure data availability accordingly to user's needs.

## References

Report: "Necessidades dos utilizadores da Tabela da Composição de Alimento". PortFIR Portuguese Network on Food Composition (RPCA), User's Working Group (GTU). INSA, 2017. Available in: <http://hdl.handle.net/10400.18/4980>