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Workshop Report

I Annual Workshop INSA-UB "The Universe of the Olive Oil" held in the Food and Nutrition Torribera Campus of the University of Barcelona, Spain, 11th November 2015

S. Vichi* and J.J. Moreno*

Departament de Nutrició, Ciències dels Aliments i Gastronomia, Universitat de Barcelona, Institut de Recerca en Nutrició i Seguritat Alimentària, Universitat de Barcelona (INSA-UB)

*Corresponding authors: stefaniavichi@ub.edu; jjmoreno@ub.edu

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The Institute for Research on Nutrition and Food Safety (INSA-UB) was formed by research groups belonging to the Faculties of Pharmacy, Biology, Chemistry and Geography and History, as well as other UB-affiliated centers and hospitals. INSA-UB was created to meet the current society's needs for research, training and service provision in sectors related to the agro-food industry.

Due to its nutritional, gastronomic, cultural and economic value, olive oil is a product of particular importance within the Mediterranean region. In order to disseminate the latest findings on different analytical and legal regulation aspects, as well as on the healthy properties of extra virgin olive oil, INSA-UB organized the workshop "The Universe of Olive Oil". Researchers from universities, hospitals and research centres, as well as a wide range of representatives of the Catalan administration, olive oil costumers and olive oil industry were brought together with the aim of strengthening the knowledge and cooperation, and to favor the interaction between the main stakeholders to promote actions for the valorization, innovation and development in this strategic area.

About 100 representatives of the above mentioned sectors attended the Workshop, which was supported by the International Olive Council (IOC), the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Barcelona, and by the five Catalan Protected Designations of Origin of virgin olive oil.

Experts from different research centers, together with promoters and representatives of the local government, presented their recent results and current trends about olive oil. The Workshop was organized into different sessions, focused on different topics: olive oil quality, authenticity and control, healthy effects and the role played within the "Mediterranean culture gastronomy" understanding that the best option to face the key challenges of the sector is a comprehensive approach in which subject areas and all stakeholders can complement and enhance themselves.

The opening address were given by Dr. Joan Llobet (Director of INSA-UB), Dr. Màrius Rubiralta (Director of the Food and Nutrition Torribera Campus-UB) and Mrs. Glòria Cugat as representative of regulatory/control administration (Departament d'Agricultura, Ramaderia i Pesca, Generalitat de Catalunya).

The first session, focused on the quality and authenticity of olive oil, was chaired by Dr. Rafael Codony (INSA-UB) and Mr. Domènec Vila (*Federació Cooperatives Agràries de Catalunya*), who highlighted the interest of the promotion and enhancement of the olive sector.

Dr. Lanfranco Conte (Università degli Studi di Udine, Italy) member of the group of chemical experts of the IOC, described current tools and new challenges for defining the quality and authenticity of olive oil. This topic was strictly related to the legal aspects, as well as official control in the olive oil sector, that were reported by Mrs. Maria Rosa Biel, from the Inspection and to the Control Department (Departament d'Agricultura, Ramaderia i Pesca, Generalitat de Catalunya), who explained the most significant aspects of quality control and fraud fight in the Catalan olive oil sector. In this regard, Dr. Alba Tres and Dr. Stefania Vichi (INSA-UB) showed the applicability of acylglycerol fingerprinting of olive oil to detect fraud, a study funded by INSA-UB. Dr. Carmen Gonzalez Barreiro (Universidad de Vigo) and Dr. Paola Quifer (INSA-UB) presented the results of their studies aimed to classify olive oils according to the variety, growing conditions and geographic location. Dr. Augustí Romero (IRTA) described the evolution in the olive oil sensory analysis in the last decades, and focused the speech on the technical procedure, reliability and weak points, and presented the current challenges and future trends to make this control tool even more effective and reliable. This conference linked perfectly with that of Dr. Diego Luis García (Instituto de la Grasa-CSIC), focused on the evaluation of virgin olive oil sensory quality, from the formation of aromatic markers to the mechanisms of physiological perception of sensory attributes by neuroimaging.

Other aspect was the role of olive oil in culture and gastronomy, which was discussed by Mr. Jaume Biarnés (Fundació Alicia) and by the Culture Center of Oil-CCOC Catalonia (La Granadella, Lleida, Spain), represented by Mr. Elies Bosch, Mrs. Silvia Pallejà. Mr. Domingo Tost, member of the Official Olive Oil Tasting Panel from Catalonia, chaired an olive oil tasting for the participants, which arose a great interest.

The second session, focused on olive oil and its healthy effects, was chaired by Mrs. Gemma Salvador (Public Health Agency of Catalonia) and Dra. Rosa M. Lamuela (INSA-UB). Dr. Montserrat Solanas (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), showed the main effects of olive oil and olive oil components on experimental mammary carcinogenesis. In a similar way, Dr. Catalina Alarcón de la Lastra (Universidad de Sevilla) reported recent evidences on the role of olive oil in the prevention/treatment of several articular and intestinal inflammatory processes. Dr. Emilia Juan and Dr. Joana Planas (INSA-UB) reported the pharmacokinetic characteristics of maslinic acid, an extra virgin olive oil component with great interest as a nutraceutical, and Dr. Juan José Moreno (INSA-UB) presented the effects of extra virgin olive oil components on the proliferation of a colon cancer cell line. Finally, as regards the evidence of the beneficial effects of olive oil in preventing cardiovascular disease, Dr. Olga Castañer (IMIM), explained that the Mediterranean dietary pattern and in particular olive oil phenolic compounds act favourably by modulating gene expression. Finally, Dr. Ramon Estruch (UB-Hospital Clínic, CIBERObn) described the results of the comprehensive study PREDIMED Mediterranean diet (Prevention with Mediterranean Diet).

The discussions and other activities carried out during the workshop highlighted the importance of the collaboration between the scientific, the cultural and the gastronomic field to facilitate the access of consumers to the knowledge about olive oil and make them an active part in the assessment and the valorisation of olive oil quality, attributes and benefits.