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**Cross-cultural conceptualization of wellbeing in the context of food consumption**

G. Ares<sup>\*1</sup>, A. Claret<sup>2</sup>, L.M. Cunha<sup>3</sup>, L. de Saldamando<sup>1</sup>, R. Deliza<sup>4</sup>, L. Guerrero<sup>2</sup>, A. Pinto de Moura<sup>1</sup>,  
D. Oliveira<sup>6</sup>, R. Symoneaux<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universidad de la República, Uruguay, <sup>2</sup>IRTA-Food Technology, Spain, <sup>3</sup>Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade do Porto, Portugal, <sup>4</sup>Embrapa Food Technology, Brazil, <sup>5</sup>Universidade Aberta, Portugal, <sup>6</sup>Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, <sup>7</sup>LUNAM Université, France

Consumers' perception of wellbeing in a food context can affect food choices and consumption and can be a better predictor of long term consumption than overall liking or purchase intention scores. However, considering that wellbeing is a broad concept which lacks of a unique definition, it is necessary to explore how consumers understand wellbeing in the context of food consumption. The present work aims at investigating consumer understanding of wellbeing and its relationship with food, taking into account the views of consumers from five countries.

A cross-cultural consumer study was carried out in Brazil, France, Portugal, Spain and Uruguay. In each country, 150 consumers were asked to complete a questionnaire comprising five open-ended questions about foods and wellbeing. The elicited terms were translated into English, coded and grouped into categories. The frequency of mention of the categories was determined and differences among countries were evaluated.

In the five countries wellbeing was mainly associated with calmness, health, happiness, food products, positive emotions and satisfaction with specific aspects of life. The effects of foods on wellbeing were strongly related to physical health, pleasure and emotional aspects. Meanwhile, consumers regarded nutrient content, manufacturing processes, sensory characteristics and context of food consumption as the main factors underlying food wellbeing. Fruits, vegetables, fish, meat, dairy products and cereals were the main foods recognized as positive for wellbeing, whereas meat products and foods high in fat, salt and sugar were perceived as negative. Significant differences ( $p < 0.0001$ ) among countries were identified in the frequency of mention of the categories elicited in the five questions, suggesting that culture affected consumer conceptualization of wellbeing.

Results from the present work provide insights for product positioning and new developments of functional foods and other products, and may contribute to the development of methodologies for measuring consumer perceived wellbeing in a food context.

Keywords: wellbeing, wellness, functional foods, qualitative studies