

« **IMPACT OF THE ENVIRONMENT ON F&V INTAKE** »

Editorial

Why do people eat enough fruits and vegetables? Motivation, abilities and environmental opportunities!

Many Fruit and Vegetable (F&V) promotion efforts are still based on the notion that people's health beliefs and related motivations are the most important drivers of F&V consumption. Such campaigns therefore communicate about the health promoting properties of F&V, implying that when we teach 'the public' that F&V are healthful, they will be sensible enough to eat enough from these food groups. Results from a wealth of health behaviour research show, however, that health beliefs are only one of many drivers of consumption, and most often not the most important one. Research shows that there are three important categories of determinants of health-related behaviours, such as F&V consumption: motivation, ability and opportunity. When people are motivated to eat enough F&V, when they have the abilities to buy, prepare and consume enough F&V, and when their environment offers plenty of opportunities to obtain and eat F&V, chances improve that people will eat more adequate amounts.

Until recently most research aiming to gain insight in the determinants of F&V intakes was focussed on motivational factors. In recent years more attention is being paid to the environmental opportunities that enable or promote F&V intakes, i.e. opportunities that may make the healthy choice the easy or default choice.

Four 'sorts' of 'the environment' have been distinguished in the scientific literature:

1. The physical environment, i.e. environmental factors that influence or determine availability and accessibility.
2. The social-cultural environment, i.e. factors that define what is socially acceptable and appropriate; what one sees others do and what one is encouraged to do by others.
3. The political environment, i.e. the rules and regulations that may influence behaviours such as F&V consumption.
4. The economic environment, i.e. factors that relate to what is affordable.

In this IFAVA newsletter three contributions focus on such potential environmental influences on F&V intakes. Dr. Lukar Thornton presents an

overview of some of the research he conducted with his colleagues at Deakin University, Australia, on physical environmental factors and F&V intakes. His study explored if access to supermarkets and other stores with F&V was associated with F&V intakes in different populations. Only few significant associations were found, but this line of research is still in its early stages, and more research is necessary on a range of availability and accessibility related issues to learn more about the relevance of physical environmental factors.

Dr. Ange Aikenhead of the International Association for the Study of Obesity presents research results regarding the political environment, and more specifically regarding rules and regulations for marketing to children. It has been established in recent reviews of the evidence that marketing of unhealthy foods to children is associated with less healthful diets and more overweight and obesity. Dr. Aikenhead presents results further indicating that the political environment is of great importance to restrict exposure to such marketing in order to promote healthier diets among children.

Finally, Prof. Ritva Prättälä from the National Institute for Health and Welfare in Helsinki, Finland, presents research results regarding the importance of the economic environment. Her research clearly confirms that in many countries, especially in Northern Europe, evident disparities in F&V intakes exist according to socioeconomic position. In other words: the less well-off have lower intakes of F&V. Her studies further show that in the countries where these disparities are apparent, availability of F&V is lower and prices are higher.

These three contributions are important examples of research focussing on disentangling the broad range of potential influences on F&V intake, going beyond mere personal and motivational factors. Such research is necessary to inform more effective F&V promotion.

Johannes Brug

EMGO Institute for Health and Care Research, Vu University Medical Center,
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

<http://JohannesBrug.Blogspot.com>

IFAVA Board of Directors

L.- A. Silber • South Africa • 5-a-Day for better health TRUST
R. Baerveldt • USA • Washington Apple Commission
S. Barnat • France • "La moitié" • Aprifel
L. DiSogra • USA • United Fresh
C. Doyle • USA • American Cancer Society
P. Dudley • New Zealand • 5+ A day
M. Richer • Canada • 5 to 10 a day
E. Pivonka • USA • Fruits & Veggies • More Matters
C. Rowley • Australia • Go for 2&5® • Horticulture Australia
V. Toft • Denmark • 6 a day

IFAVA Contact info

HEAD OFFICE
International Fruit And Vegetable Alliance
c/o Canadian Produce Marketing Association
162 Cleopatra
Ottawa, Canada, K2G 5X2

IFAVA Committees



Global Leadership Committee

L.- A. Silber • South Africa
S. Barnat • France
P. Dudley • New Zealand
C. Rowley • Australia

Scientific Clearing House Committee

S. Barnat • France
K. Hoy • USA
E. Pivonka • USA

Communications Committee

L.- A. Silber • South Africa
P. Dudley • New Zealand
C. Rowley • Australia

IFAVA



CHAIRMAN:
C. Rowley, Australia
E-mail: chairman@ifava.org

VICE CHAIRMAN:
P. Dudley, New Zealand
E-mail: vicechairman@ifava.org