

FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE WORLD IODINE ASSOCIATION: IODINE IN FOOD SYSTEMS AND HEALTH AND PREVENTING IODINE DEFICIENCY DISORDERS

The World Iodine Association (WIA) held its first conference on the topic of ‘Iodine in Food Systems and Health’ on 15 November in Pisa. Scientists and policy-driven stakeholders discussed an essential issue: How can iodine content of a healthy diet be optimized to sustainably prevent Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD).

The international conference tackled the challenge of prevention of iodine deficiency from two angles. On the scientific side, researchers consolidated their knowledge about IDD and shared the latest results attesting to the extent of this health issue. Iodine deficiency can cause disorders ranging from a disruption of the energy metabolism and brain function due to a disturbance of thyroid function, to loss of IQ and growth retardation in foetuses and young children. Prof. Pierdomenico Perata, Rector of the Sant’ Anna School of Advanced Studies, was pleased to host the event “as this represents an opportunity to increase our understanding about how variations in iodine intake affect human and animal health”. He further stated that “our goal is to be able to prevent IDD in developed and developing countries”.

On the political side, the diverse audience debated on various solutions to prevent IDD, whether conventional- i.e. salt iodisation - or more innovative - e.g. the agronomic biofortification of food and feed. Against this background, the WIA Director General, Mr. Attilio Caligiani, called for a common strategy to tackle Iodine Deficiency Disorders: “In Europe, there are at least ten countries that are considered mildly iodine deficient, among which: Italy, France, Denmark and Ireland. Universal salt iodisation is one of the several possible ways to provide iodine to the population. Agronomic biofortification of crops grown by farmers is a recent tool to increase the daily intake of essential micro-nutrients, including iodine, in a sustainable and cost-effective way. It is elemental in the development of nutrition sensitive agriculture to prevent both hunger and malnutrition globally.

The WIA conference promoted a common multi-stakeholder approach towards truly sustainable prevention of iodine deficiency in Europe. “It is our mission to raise awareness among the European and national institutions about the risks associated with IDD, and to ensure their support in the near future, as well as on the long term. A balanced iodine nutrition needs to be part of the future public health strategy” concluded Mr. Caligiani.

The World Iodine Association is an international non-profit organisation that represents the iodine value chain - from manufacturers to consumers. As part of its missions, WIA aims to help prevent iodine deficiency worldwide. WIA, thus, acts as a platform that brings together the scientific community, industry, and patients and consumer organizations to raise awareness about and effectively fight iodine deficiency disorders.



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