

Collaborations Between INFOODS And FAO To Expand Sources Of International Nutrient Data

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The food composition data scene is evolving. In terms of relationships with the data of other countries and regions, the role of the US is shifting from that of an exporter of data and methods to one in which we need to import data and need to at understand the analysis and calculation methods used by others, rather than trying to insist that they change. A series of recent decisions involving the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations University's International Network of Food Data Systems (INFOODS), and the International Union of Nutrition Societies (IUNS) are likely to accelerate this trend. After well over a decade of absence from the field, FAO has announced its intention to return to the food composition area. FAO activities will complement work done by INFOODS over the intervening years and developing cooperative agreements between the two UN organizations will strengthen the program areas of each other them. In addition, modest increases in available resources have also permitted restarting dormant IUNS and IUNS/INFOODS efforts in data quality and terminology for foods and food components and recasting the IUNS sponsorship of CODATA to make that relationship more useful and effective. These efforts will also be coordinated with FAO as appropriate.

This paper discussed these changes and where they are likely to lead from the perspective of the North American data user. It provided an overview of the various elements of development of food composition data and how the FAO/INFOODS arrangements will alter those relationships in the next few years. It then examined how data will be located and obtained in the world this work predicts and the implications of this for the shorter term.