

HEALTHGRAIN

Cereals as a weapon against metabolic disorders

Cereals and wholegrain foods can reduce the risk of developing certain diseases. Growing scientific evidence shows that the daily intake of cereal foods classified as wholegrain and/or high in fibre plays an important role in human health. While consumers across Europe are increasingly aware of this, refined white wheat flour foods still forms an important part of their cereal intake. Through HEALTHGRAIN, the European Union is pushing to change this trend, acting right at the beginning of the food chain through the production of new grain traits. This € 17 million EU funded project joined 44 partners from 15 countries working to increase availability of high-quality cereal-based foods and the average European citizen's intake of protective compounds of whole grains or their fractions.

HEALTHGRAIN is providing European grain producers with new technologies to develop globally competitive, healthier grain traits while helping the processing industry, including a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises, to develop new competitive healthy grain foods. These include foods for individuals sensitive to particular cereal constituents, for example, gluten-free products.

Nutrition epidemiology research increasingly demonstrates that a diet rich in whole grain and grain fibre based foods protects against the development of diet-related disorders, such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and the rapidly expanding epidemic of type 2 diabetes.

Analysis of a wide range of wheat varieties within the HEALTHGRAIN project has shown substantial variation (up to four-fold) in the content and composition of these components. Furthermore, a significant proportion of this variation, particularly for dietary fibre content, is highly heritable and hence can be exploited by plant breeders to produce new types of wheat with enhanced health benefits.

The industrial feasibility study of 'Healthflour' production, carried out in HEALTHGRAIN, revealed that 'Healthflour' has less potential food safety issues than whole wheat flour and bread-making companies are already showing interest in using this new flour concept. The project will give European grain producers and the processing industry new technologies to develop healthier grains and products that can significantly contribute in combating obesity, heart diseases and type-2 diabetes

Over 40 HEALTHGRAIN related industries, universities, institutes and organisations communicating to consumers have established in June 2010, directly after the end of the project, the HEALTHGRAIN Forum aiming at further pursuing the HEALTHGRAIN objectives after the end of the project.

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