

**Report of the
First EU-spf Strategic Meeting & Workshop
on
Fermented foods, public health and Social well-being
for the
Policy Makers of the Institutions of Higher Education and Research
organized by
SASNET- Fermented Foods, Anand Agricultural University, Institute of Rural Management, Anand
and
Lund University, Sweden.
May 26-27, 2005, IRMA, Anand, Gujarat, India**

Swedish South Asian Network on Fermented Foods is a body of Scientists, Professionals and Institutions engaged in promoting research and development in fermented foods. This was formed in November 2003 at the first international seminar and workshop on "Fermented foods, health status and social well-being". The network is now operating a European Union supported programme to sensitize all concerned towards research, development and extension to promote fermented foods. The project constitutes four strategic meetings for different categories of people and the first of the series was a two-day workshop and strategic meeting for the policy makers of the Institutions of Higher Education and Research on "Fermented Foods, Health Status and Social Well being" organized at IRMA, Anand during May 26-27, 2005. The programme was jointly organized by the Institute of Rural Management Anand; Swedish South Asian Network on Fermented Foods; Lund University, Sweden and Anand Agricultural University, Gujarat. Forty two delegates representing different research institutions of India and three from Sweden participated in the programme.

The programme began with a formal inauguration in the auspicious presence of Dr. V. Kurien, Chairman, IRMA and Prof. M. C. Varshneya, Vice Chancellor, AAU. In his welcome address, Prof L. K. Vaswani, Director of the IRMA and Coordinator of the project outlined the genesis of IRMA and its role in rural development. He also mentioned the role of Dr. Kurien in bringing the dairy industry and IRMA to its present status and underlined the importance of fermented foods in the Indian context.

Prof M C Varshneya, in his inaugural address reiterated that India had emerged as the largest milk producer of the world and acknowledged the role of Dr Kurien in the process. He said that fermented foods were known to us since ancient times and were as old as the Indian history. He confirmed the significance of the network and acknowledged the need to create a database of the traditional fermented foods of India in an attempt to prevent some products from becoming extinct. Prof. Varshneya assured of all cooperation to the network in all its future activities.

Padma Vibhushan Dr. V. Kurien, Chairman of IRMA as well as Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation presided over the function. In his Presidential address, Dr V Kurien emphatically said that India would undoubtedly become a major player in the food market and stressed on the need for India to acquire a humane face before she gains stature as a major power in the food market. He felt that the network had a major role to play in ensuring research and development to authenticate the health claims made by fermented milks.

Dr B. M. Nair, Chairman of the Network and Professor Emeritus at Lund University, Sweden made an explicit presentation tracing out the sequence of events that led to formation of the network and described the vision mission and objectives of the network. He urged the members to have a look into the website of the network www.fermented-foods.net and join hands in strengthening the network and in realizing the objectives of the network.

Dr J B Prajapati, Coordinator of the Network and Project Director proposed the vote of thanks at the end.

In all, there were two technical sessions on day one, and two sessions of group discussions on day two

In the first session, there were four technical presentations on "State of the art on Fermented Foods" Prof. L. K. Vasawani, Director, IRMA, was the chairman of the session and Dr. C. D. Khedkar, was Rapporteur, Dr. Dinesh Kumar, SILSBM, Solan presented the report on traditional fermented foods and beverages of North India, with a major concentration on Himachal Pradesh. Dr. G. Vijayalaxmi presented a detailed report on the fermented foods and South India and Sri Lanka Ms. Lata Ramchandran presented an account of the traditional fermented foods of Western Region of India. Dr. P. K. Nema summarised the information about the various fermented foods and beverages of eastern states of India.

The second session included presentation of case studies/experiences on use of fermented foods. Dr. J. M. Dave, former Principal, SMC College of Dairy Science, Chaired the session and Dr. G. Vijayalaxmi was the rapporteur. In this session, Dr. Asa Ljungh, Lund University presented her paper on selection criteria for Lactic Acid Bacteria for their use as probiotic cultures. Dr. Rangne Fonden, Consultant, Arla Foods, Sweden shared his experience in selecting and documenting a new probiotic strain *Lactobacillus acidophilus* F19. Dr. J. B. Prajapati, Anand Agricultural University, highlighted the work at his department related to isolation of probiotic organisms followed by development of milk and cereal based preparation using these isolates. Some health benefits of these isolates were also highlighted. Dr. Khedkar from Dairy Technology College, Pusad shared his experience on *in vivo* studies on the health benefits of probiotic cultures in tribal areas of Maharashtra. Mr. Tansukhlal Jain, Managing Director of Chr. Hansen (India), Mumbai, presented the current global trends in probiotic fermented milk products.

The first session on the second day of the meet was a group discussion where participants highlighted the research work on traditional fermented foods carried out at their institutes. Dr. S. S. Sannabhadri, Principal, SMC College of Dairy Science, Anand Agricultural University, Anand chaired this session and Dr. H. K. Desai, Managing Director, Vidya Dairy, Anand was the Rapporteur. The session was highly interactive. This included the highlights of on-going research work on fermented functional foods at important institutions like Lund University, Sweden; Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore; National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad; National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal; Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; SNDT Women's University, Mumbai, West Bengal University of Animal and Fishery Sciences, Calcutta; Sardar Patel University, VV Nagar, etc.

At the end of this session, the delegates were divided into four small groups of about 10 members each for brain storming. These groups were headed by Dr. Kalpagam Polasa, Dy. Director, NIN, Hyderabad; Dr. G. Vijayalaxmi, Dy. Director, CFTRI, Mysore; Dr. J. M. Dave, Former Dean, DSC, Anand and Dr. P. N. Thakar former Prof. & Head, Dairy Business Management, DSC, Anand. In this session, participants had exhaustive discussions and came up with 2-3 major thrust areas in which the collaborative research projects can be proposed through the network. The outcome of these group discussions are as under:

GROUP – A : proposed collaborative projects on

- Development of cereal based fermented foods for supplement in feeding of women and children.
- Understanding the process technology of fermented foods using khaman as a model.
- Nutritional and molecular characterization of traditional fermented food of Himachal Pradesh.

GROUP – B : prioritized the following areas

- Development of database on fermented foods of India and particularly the region specific lesser known ones.
- Provide scientific base for the health and therapeutic claims of some fermented foods already being marketed.
- To standardize, characterize and develop the technology of some popular fermented foods like Handva, Anarse and Kurdi.

GROUP – C : highlighted the following aspects

- Creation of database for fermented foods based on surveys
- To conduct a detailed study on a largely consumed and popular cereals based fermented product - Idli.
- To validate the health claims of dahi/buttermilk as indicated in Ayurveda.

GROUP – D : deliberated on the following

- Documentation of fermented foods
- Clinical investigations to substantiate health claims of fermented foods
- Need to look into legal aspects for marketing fermented foods.
- Develop a centre to maintain proven isolates.

The valedictory session was chaired by Dr. B. M. Nair, while Dr. J. B. Prajapati worked as rapporteur. In this session, Rapporteurs of all the technical sessions presented their summarized report. The outcome of all four group discussion groups was also presented by one member from each of the groups, which was further discussed and approved after incorporating the modifications/ suggestions given by the members.

In this session a reference committee for data collection and data base development for fermented foods of south Asia was constituted. The reference committee will guide the process of design of questionnaire, specification of the details on technology, microbiology, chemistry of the products and processes. The data collection will also include the details of the consumer's perception of the quality of the finished food products as well as producers perception of the quality of the raw materials.

The elected reference committee consisted of the following members:

1. Dr G Vijayalakshmi, Central Food Technology Research Institute, Mysore
2. Dr AK Mishra, West Bengal University of Animal & Fishery Sciences, Mohanpur (Calcutta)
3. Dr Shobha Udipi, SNDT Womens University, Mumbai
4. Dr PK Nema, College of Horticulture, Mandsaur
5. Dr Rekha Singhal, University Department of Chemical Techbology, Mumbai
6. Dr DN Gandhi, National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal
7. Dr Mir Salahuddin, Sher-e-Kashmir Univ., Srinagar
8. Dr A Ramesh, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati
9. Dr Daisy John, SIBERS College, Kolhapur
10. Dr JB Prajapati, Anand Agricultural University, Anand
11. Dr RC Keshri, Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izatnagar
12. Dr Kalpagam Polasa, National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad
13. Dr RK Pandey, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
14. Dr VK Joshi, Himachal Pradesh University, Solan
15. Dr Baboo M. Nair, Lund University, Sweden (Coordinator)

The network will organize similar meeting and workshop for the policy makers of food industry in August 2005. Those who are desirous to participate may write to Dr J B Prajapati, Project Director and Head, Dairy Microbiology Department, Anand Agricultural University, Anand – 388 110 (Gujarat). Ph: 02692 264170, Fax: 02692 261314. Email: prajapatijashbhai@yahoo.com or jbprajapati@aau.in