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Motivation letter for Healthgrain Forum vice chair position

Healthgrain Forum (HGF) visions itself as an active network among universities, institutes and industries that will assist consumers maintain health via promoting the consumption of whole grain and high fibre grain-based foods. This development will then lead, at the societal level, to decrease in health care costs, and will provide added value for the companies in the production chain from farm to fork.

As a candidate for vice chair position in HGF, I could not agree more of the vision and the objectives written within the vision of the HGF.

However, we face in the media mixed messages regarding the cereal products and the whole grain related health effects. This is confusing for the consumer. Thus, it would be of importance to understand consumer choices and perceptions – how to enable and build evidence based information and messages that reach the consumer.

One way to increase understanding on the whole grain foods and their health effects is to invest in more close collaboration between food technology and nutrition both in industry and in science. HGF offers great opportunity for that. We should aim for healthy foods that promote balanced nutrition, but at the same time are palatable and enjoyable for the consumer.

Current development within food system towards sustainable food choices and plant based diet offers also a great opportunity to the collaboration within HGF. Cereal products as the main sources of energy and potentially excellent source of many health benefits is in the heart of this development. However, great deal of the cereal fibre fraction with its beneficial bioactive components and essential nutrients are discarded or used as a feed. It should be noted that this part also contains good amount of protein. Via active collaboration within HGF, we should research potential new innovations enabling more efficient use of fibre fraction in food production. Along this, it is important to take into account and evaluate the nutritional value and actual bioavailability of these products in human physiology.

These objectives demand active promotion of the collaboration among research institutes and companies, and thus my aim would be support and be proactive in promoting such activities, and seeking for example European wide research/network/research education funding. I see this position as an opportunity to promote active collaboration, and look forward to the opportunity.

With kind regards,

Marjukka Kolehmainen

Biography/2019

Marjukka Kolehmainen is Professor of Nutrition at the University of Eastern Finland, Institute of Public Health and Clinical Nutrition. She has 25 years' experience on conducting clinical dietary interventions from postprandial studies to long term interventions with the main interest in health effects of foods, food components and diets, especially whole grain cereals. Studies include the effects ranging from the molecular level to eating behavior in humans (109 peer-reviewed publications, H-index 30, 02052019/Web of Science). Recently the interest has been in the interaction between metabolic and psychological stress and their relation with eating behavior and low grade inflammation. Within Kolehmainen-team, the ongoing work is to set up the methodology for protein bioavailability studies and gastric-colon model to study the bioavailability of various protein sources and their interaction within the gut microbiota via the ongoing FoodValley-project.



Kolehmainen has supervised as the main or co-supervisor nine PhD-students, and is currently supervising seven students. She has arranged several international PhD-level courses, and is responsible of several courses for Master and Bachelor level Nutrition students at the Institute of Public Health and Clinical Nutrition.

She is a member of the Executive committee of the European Nutrigenomics Organisation (NuGO), and is vice chair of Finnish Society of Nutrition Research. She has acted as a scientific manager in Nordic Centre of Excellence SYSDIET and as a work package leader in various national consortia, for example in the Body and Mind program of the strategic research centre of health and well being, Salwe Ltd. She is currently a partner within Marie Skłodowska Curie action and supervising three ESR-students (one as the main supervisor).

Contact: marjukka.kolehmainen@uef.fi