MILAN, June 10, 2013 – An international committee of leading nutrition scientists from ten countries on three continents today released an important Scientific Consensus Statement. They concluded that carbohydrate quality (measured by the glycemic index or GI) matters and that the carbohydrates present in different foods affect post-meal blood sugar differently, with important health implications. They also confirmed that there is convincing evidence from a large body of research that low glycemic index/glycemic load (GI/GL) diets reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease, help control blood glucose in people with diabetes, and may also help with weight management. The Committee recommended inclusion of glycemic index and glycemic load in national dietary guidelines and food composition tables, and that packaging labels and symbols on low-GI foods should be considered. They also confirmed low GI measurements complement other ways of characterizing carbohydrate foods (such as fiber and whole grain content), and should be considered in the context of an overall healthy diet.

The Consensus Statement was the culmination of the International Scientific Consensus Summit on Glycemic Index, Glycemic Load and Glycemic Response, organized June 6-7, 2013 in Stresa, Italy by two nonprofits, the Nutrition Foundation of Italy and Oldways. At the Summit, scientists reviewed the latest research on glycemic index (a measure of carbohydrate quality), glycemic load (a measure that combines carbohydrate quality and quantity in real-world portion sizes), and overall issues of glycemic response (how the body’s management of blood sugar is affected by both food and lifestyle, over time).

This Consensus Statement on how different foods affect our blood sugar is especially important, given the rapid rise in obesity and diabetes. The scientists stressed the need to communicate information on GI/GL to the general public and health professionals.
That’s why the Nutrition Foundation of Italy (NFI) and Oldways – two nonprofits with a long history of consensus meetings – teamed up to facilitate this scientific meeting of the minds. “Top scientists and researchers presented their newest research and networked for a day and a half,” said Andrea Poli, Scientific Director of NFI. Oldways President Sara Baer-Sinnott further explained, “Then they deliberated for four hours, without media or any industry attendees present, to develop a consensus statement designed to clarify current consumer understanding and guide future research in this important area.”

Walter Willett, MD, Dr.PH, Chairman of the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health and one of the participating scientists said, “Given essentially conclusive evidence that high GI/GL diets contribute to risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, reduction in GI and GL should be a public health priority.”

David Jenkins, MD, PhD, DSc, Canada Research Chair in Nutrition and Metabolism, in the Department of Nutritional Sciences, Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto and widely acknowledged as the originator of the GI concept, announced that the scientists will continue to work together. “We have formed an international Carbohydrate Quality Consortium to collaborate and share research, with an overall goal of improving public health,” said Dr. Jenkins.

Short interviews with the scientists are available online through the Oldways and NFI websites, and scientists’ presentations will also be available soon.

Scientists taking part in the Scientific Consensus Summit included Dr. Jenkins and Dr. Thomas Wolever, who originated the concept of Glycemic Index at the University of Toronto, and Dr. Willett, who developed the Glycemic Load with colleagues at the Harvard School of Public Health. Other renowned experts and pioneers contributing to the consensus were Jennie Brand-Miller and Alan Barclay from Australia; Cyril Kendall, John Sievenpiper and Livia Augustin from Canada; Salwa Rizkalla from France; Anette Buyken from Germany; Antonia Trichopoulou from Greece; Furio Brighenti, Carlo La Vecchia, Andrea Poli, and Gabriele Riccardi from Italy; Antonio Ceriello from Spain, Inger Björck from Sweden; Geoffrey Livesey from the UK, and Simin Liu and Sara Baer-Sinnott from the USA.
About NFI – Nutrition Foundation of Italy (Milan, Italy)
The Nutrition Foundation of Italy was created in December 1976 with the goal of enabling interaction and collaboration with government bodies, universities and industry to contribute to the development of scientific research, to the exchange of information in the field of nutrition and to the promotion of interdisciplinary researches in this area. NFI has a Scientific Committee of Experts with recognized competence in the different disciplines related to food and beverage.

About Oldways (Boston, MA, USA)
Oldways is a nonprofit food and nutrition education organization, guiding people to good health through heritage. Oldways is best known for its family of healthy, traditional food pyramids, including the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid, as well as its Whole Grains Council and Whole Grain Stamp, now on more than 8,000 products in 41 countries. For two decades, Oldways has collaborated worldwide with experts including scientists, health care professionals, chefs, historians, food producers and food writers to create “mini-movements” that have inspired millions of people to change the way they eat.

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For a copy of the Glycemic Summit Scientific Consensus Statement (available in English), please contact:

- Anna Miniotti, meeting@nutrition-foundation.it, +39-02-7600-6271
- Rachel Greenstein, rachel@oldwayspt.org, +1-617-896-4888

For more information, visit:

- Nutrition Foundation of Italy (www.nutrition-foundation.it) or
- Oldways (www.oldwayspt.org)
An international panel of experts has formed the “Carbohydrate Quality Consortium (CQC)” which met in Stresa on June 6-7, 2013 and discussed the importance of carbohydrate quality in addition to quantity.

**DRAFT Scientific Consensus Statement***

1. Carbohydrates present in different foods have distinct physiological effects, including effects on post-prandial glycemia (PPG), with different implications for health.

2. Reducing PPG is recognized as a beneficial physiological effect.

3. Ways to reduce PPG include slowing carbohydrate absorption by consuming low glycemic index (GI) and glycemic load (GL) foods to reduce the dietary GI and GL.

4. The GI methodology is a sufficiently valid and reproducible method for differentiating foods based on their glycemic response (GR) [footnote: high vs low GI foods as defined by the isostandard, [55; processing and cooking effects]

5. The GI quantifies specific physiological properties of carbohydrate -containing foods as influenced by the food matrix. These characteristics extend beyond their chemical composition including delaying gastric emptying and reducing the rate of digestion and small intestinal absorption.

6. When considering the macronutrient composition, the GL (the product of GI and carbohydrate content/1000kJ) is the single best predictor of the glycemic response of foods.
7. There is convincing evidence from meta-analyses of controlled dietary trials that diets low in GI improve glycemic control in people with type 2 diabetes.

8. There is convincing evidence from meta-analyses of prospective cohort studies that low GI/GL diets reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes.

9. There is convincing evidence from a large body of prospective cohort studies that low GI/GL diets reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.

10. The proof of principle for the concept of slowing carbohydrate absorption is the use of alpha-glucosidase inhibitors (acarbose etc.) to reduce progression to type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease.

11. The carbohydrate quality as defined by GI/GL is particularly important for individuals who are sedentary, overweight and at increased risk of type 2 diabetes.

12. Potential mechanisms for reduction of type 2 diabetes include evidence that low GI/GL diets improve insulin sensitivity and beta-cell function in people with type 2 diabetes and those at risk for type 2 diabetes.

13. Potential mechanisms for reduction of coronary heart disease include evidence that low GI/GL diets improve blood lipids and inflammatory markers including C-reactive protein (CRP).


15. The GI complements other ways of characterizing carbohydrate-foods, such as fiber and whole grain content.

16. Low GI is to be considered in a context of a healthy diet.

17. Given the rapid rise in diabetes and obesity there is a need to communicate information on GI/GL to the general public and health professionals.
18. This should be supported by inclusion of GI/GL in dietary guidelines and in food composition tables.

19. In addition package labels and low GI/GL symbols on healthy foods should be considered.

20. More comprehensive high-quality food composition tables need to be developed for GI/GL at the national level.

*NOTE: This Statement will be finalized when footnotes and scientific references and other minor changes are added.*

Scientific Consensus Committee:

Chairs:

David J.A. Jenkins, MD, PhD, DSc, University Professor and Canada Research Chair in Nutrition and Metabolism, Department of Nutritional Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, Director, Risk Factor Modification Centre, St. Michael's Hospital (Toronto, Canada)

Walter C. Willett, MD, DrPH, Fredrick John Stare Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition Chair, Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health (Boston, USA)

Members:

Livia Augustin, PhD, Research Fellow, Risk Factor Modification Centre, St. Michael's Hospital (Toronto, Canada)

Sara Baer-Sinnott, President, Oldways (Boston, USA)

Alan W. Barclay, PhD, Head of Research, Australian Diabetes Council; Chief Scientific Officer Glycemic Index Foundation (Sydney, Australia)

Inger Björck, PhD, Professor and Managing Director Antidiabetic Food Centre, Lund University (Lund, Sweden)
Jennie C. Brand-Miller, PhD, Professor, Boden Institute of Obesity, Nutrition, Exercise and Eating Disorders, University of Sydney (Sydney, Australia)

Furio Brighenti, DrPH, Professor of Human Nutrition, Department of Food Science University of Parma (Parma, Italy)

Anette E. Buyken, PhD, Research Associate, Department of Nutritional Epidemiology, University of Bonn (Bonn, Germany).

Antonio Ceriello, MD, Head of Research at the Institut d'Investigacions Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer (IDIBAPS) (Barcelona, Spain)

Cyril W.C. Kendall, PhD, Research Associate, Department of Nutritional Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto (Toronto, Canada) and Adj. Professor College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon, Canada)

Carlo La Vecchia, MD, Chief, Department of Epidemiology, Mario Negri Institute, and Professor of Epidemiology, University of Milan, (Milan, Italy)

Geoffrey Livesey, PhD, Director, Independent Nutrition Logic (Wymondham, UK)

Simin Liu, MD, ScD, Professor, Departments of Epidemiology and Medicine, Brown University (Providence, USA)

Andrea Poli, MD, Scientific Director, Nutrition Foundation of Italy (Milan, Italy)

Gabriele Riccardi, MD, Full Professor of Endocrinology and Metabolic Diseases, Department of Clinical Medicine and Surgery, Federico II University (Naples, Italy)

Salwa W. Rizkalla, MD, PhD, DSc, Senior Researcher, National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM) U 872, team 7, Research centre in human nutrition, ICAN Institute of Cardiometabolism & Nutrition, University Pierre et Marie Curie-Paris 6, Centre of Research in Human Nutrition, Pitié Salpêtrière Hospital (Paris, France).

John L. Sievenpiper, MD, PhD, Toronto 3D Knowledge Synthesis and Clinical Trials Unit, Clinical Nutrition and Risk Factor Modification Centre, St. Michael's Hospital (Toronto, Canada), Department of Pathology and Molecular Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University (Hamilton, Canada).

Antonia Trichopoulou, MD, PhD, Professor and Director, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Food & Nutrition, Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, University of Athens Medical School, and Vice President, Hellenic Health Foundation (Athens, Greece)

Thomas M.S. Wolever MD, PhD, Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences, University of Toronto (Toronto, Canada)

This International Scientific Consensus Summit was co-organized by the Nutrition Foundation of Italy and Oldways.