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SCIENTISTS AGREE PASTA IS A HEALTHY FOOD

*Worldwide Scientists Recognize Health Benefits of Pasta
and Urge Acknowledgment of its Low Environmental Impact*

MILAN, Oct. 27, 2015 – An international committee of scientists and food authorities today released a Scientific Consensus Statement concluding that, contrary to fad diet thinking, pasta should be characterized as a healthy complex carbohydrate-containing food suitable to most diets. For the first time since the original Consensus Statement was introduced in 2004, scientists addressed topics including gluten-free trends, sports nutrition and sustainability.

This was the outcome of The Scientific Consensus Conference on the Healthy Pasta Meal, a scientific conference organized by the non-profit Oldways, the International Pasta Organisation (IPO) and [AIDEPI](#), as part of the V World Pasta Congress, October 25-27, 2015, in Milan, Italy.

The conference featured scientists from nine countries exchanging information about their latest research on carbohydrates, nutrition, health, and pasta. This research was summarized in the Consensus Statement in a form that can be used by doctors, health professionals, dietitians, scientists, media, the food industry and consumers. This statement serves as an important expansion and update of an earlier Pasta Consensus Statement developed with scientists released at an Oldways Conference in Rome in 2004 and updated in 2010.

“One of the important findings is that the actual process of making pasta creates a lower glycemic food that is slowly digested and helps control blood sugar and weight, differentiating it from other carbohydrates,” said Sara Baer-Sinnott, president, Oldways.

It was also highlighted that pasta, a simple plant-based food, made most often of just two ingredients -- durum wheat and water -- also has a low environmental impact. In the Statement, scientists recognized the importance of addressing sustainability, although the topic was recently removed from consideration from the USDA Dietary Guidelines.

“Today, consumers are confronted with not just nutritional choices when it comes to food, but those that impact the environment and culture,” said Baer-Sinnott.

As part of the World Pasta Congress program, David Katz, MD, Founding Director, Yale University Prevention Research Center, reviewed research on the best dietary patterns for good health and discussed how pasta fits with that.

“If what we mean by best diet is a basic dietary pattern, then, yes, absolutely we can say what’s best – a plant-based diet, real food, close to nature,” said Katz. “You don’t have to eat pasta to have an optimal diet and optimal health but you can. And since you can, why wouldn’t you?”

Key findings and conclusions from the Consensus Statement include:

1. Scientific research increasingly supports the importance of total diet, rather than individual foods.
2. Pasta is a key component of many of the world’s traditional healthy eating patterns, such as the scientifically-proven Mediterranean Diet. Most plant-based dietary patterns help prevent and slow progression of major chronic diseases and confer greater health benefits than current Western dietary patterns.
3. Many clinical trials confirm that excess calories, and not carbohydrates, are responsible for obesity. Diets successful in promoting weight loss can emphasize a range of healthy carbohydrates, protein and fat. All these three macronutrients, in balance, are essential for designing a healthy, individualized diet anyone can follow for their whole life. Moreover, very low carbohydrate diets may not be safe, especially in the long term.
4. Pasta is satiating and keeps you fuller longer. A pasta meal can be moderate in its calorie content, assuming the portion is correct and the dressing-topping is not calorie-rich.
5. At a time when obesity and diabetes have a high prevalence around the world, pasta meals and other low-glycemic foods may help control blood sugar and weight especially in overweight people. Glycemic index is a factor that impacts the healthfulness of carbohydrate-rich foods. There is a beneficial effect in the way pasta is made. The process of manufacturing reduces its glycemic response. Whole grain pasta, which provides more fiber, is also a good choice.
6. Pasta is an affordable, healthy choice available in almost all societies. Promoting the affordability and accessibility of pasta meals can help overcome the misperception that healthy foods are too expensive.
7. Healthy pasta meals are a delicious way to eat more vegetables, legumes and other healthy foods often under-consumed. Pasta is a way to introduce other Mediterranean diet foods (other cultural traditions), especially for children and adolescents.
8. Pasta meals are enjoyed in cultural traditions worldwide. As they are like a canvas, they are versatile and easily adaptable to national/regional seasonal ingredients.
9. The general population can eat pasta and should not choose a gluten-free product if not affected by a gluten-related disorder correctly diagnosed. For those with gluten sensitivities or allergies, or celiac disease, there are gluten-free alternatives.
10. Pasta is a simple plant-based food, and has a low environmental impact.

11. Pasta consumption is suitable for people who do physical exercise and particularly in sports. Pasta, as with other cereal foods, provides carbohydrates and is also a source of protein. Pasta may be used alone or lightly seasoned before training or combined with other foods after training, in order to improve physical performance. High protein and low carbohydrate diets are discouraged in active people.
12. Doctors, nutritionists and other health professionals should educate the consumer to choose varied and balanced pasta meals for good health.

Scientists on the panel represented: Argentina, Brazil, France, Greece, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, and U.S.

About Oldways

Oldways (www.oldwayspt.org) is a nonprofit food and nutrition education organization, with a mission to inspire healthy eating through cultural food traditions and lifestyles. Simply, Oldways advocates for the healthful pleasures of real food. Oldways' programs include the Whole Grains Council; Oldways Cheese Coalition; Mediterranean Foods Alliance; African Heritage & Health; Oldways Nutrition Exchange; Oldways Supermarket Dietitian Symposium; and Oldways Culinary Travel. The organization is well-known for creating the Whole Grain Stamp and the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid.

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***For a copy of the “Healthy Pasta Meals” Consensus Statement (available in English, Spanish, and Italian), please contact:
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