

Foreword

Food-related research has become a stronghold within the European Commission Framework Programmes, covering aspects such as food production, food safety, health and nutrition. For instance, in the FLAIR Programme of the second Framework Programme (FP2) the Commission funded 33 food projects, in the AIR Programme (FP3) 72 projects were funded, in the FAIR Programme (FP4) the Commission funded 118 food-related projects, and in the ongoing Fifth Framework Programme 123 projects have thus far been funded within the Key Action 'Food, Nutrition & Health'.

During this expansion, there were many selected proposals that covered new food-related topics. Such an example is the Data Food Networking project (DAFNE), which focuses on the utilisation and interpretation of dietary data collected in the context of the nationally representative Household Budget Surveys (HBS).

The starting point for the DAFNE initiative was two workshops funded in the late 1980s by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the European Union (EU), which explored the possibility of obtaining harmonised and comparable nutrition information from various European countries using HBS data. Since 1987, the National Nutrition Centre in Athens organised a series of workshops and pilot studies in order to develop such a system. These activities eventually led to the EU-funded DAFNE I and II projects, which aimed at establishing the best possible way to achieve international comparisons. In 1997, the follow up FAIR-3096 Concerted Action was

granted financial support, with the aim of evaluating the compatibility of household budget and individual nutrition survey data. The endeavour of the last ten years is summarised in the present Special Issue.

It has taken 14 years from the first workshop to reach this current publication, illustrating the time and energy required to establish and understand this innovative food-related concept. To be able to achieve the final results and set the basis for future research in this field, the funding of the DAFNE initiative by the EU plays an important role, as does the exchange of the necessary HBS data and the acknowledgement by the EU of the relevance of these activities.

The information produced by the DAFNE project is widely requested, which indicates the need for reliable information of this type.

The DAFNE project shows that household surveys do indeed contain useful data on food consumption. This publication is a tangible result of the DAFNE projects and was possible by the efforts of all partners involved in DAFNE.

My congratulations to Dr Antonia Trichopoulou for her dedication as co-ordinator of the project and to all the participants for their excellent work and contributions to the project and its final output.

Liam Breslin
Head of Unit 'Health, Food & Environment'
DG Research
Brussels