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Folate and health – still a challenge in food and nutrition science

It is well recognized that a good folate status is linked to several health benefits. Recently also attention has been given to the role of folate on the mediation of one-carbon metabolism. Mandatory food fortification with folic acid was therefore introduced in several countries to successfully improve the population's folate status. However, other national health authorities decided against mandatory fortification and rely on other approaches to improve the dietary folate intake (e.g. by increasing the consumption of foods naturally rich in folate and folate-rich ingredients, or (novel) foods with increased folate content from bioprocessing). The presentation gives an overview on how methods of food processing or bioprocessing and storage affect the retention of the vitamin. Some examples on research aiming to develop novel foods with increased folate content will be presented. The challenging task to determine the vitamin's bioavailability and bioefficacy will be discussed. Finally, the presentation will give insights into the metabolic effects of dietary intervention with different folate forms (synthetic folic acid versus natural food folate) by initial results from ongoing research. Principles of study designs and findings from long-term and short-term human trials will be presented in order to explain why there are still today inconclusive data regarding dietary folate bioavailability.

Biography

Cornelia M Witthöft has completed her PhD in Nutrition Science at Justus Liebig University, Giessen, Germany. She worked as a Researcher at the Institute of Food Research in Norwich, UK, and received an EC Marie Curie grant for Post-doc studies at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, where she stayed for 16 years. Currently, she is working as a Professor in Food Science at Linnaeus University in Kalmar, Sweden. She is a member of the national expert panel for Nutrition and Public Health and was appointed member of the "Folate Expert Group" for the recent revision of the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations.

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