

Academic exchange programme in nutrition: Norway and South Africa

A meeting was held during the week 29 May – 2 June in Oslo, Norway between members of the Department of Nutrition, Faculty of Medicine, University of Oslo and the heads of the Departments of Nutrition of three South African universities, Professor Demetre Labadarios, Stellenbosch University, Dr Marjianne Senekal, University of Cape Town, and Professor Eleni Maunder, University of KwaZulu-Natal, and Mr Sibonile Khoza, coordinator and senior researcher, Socio-Economic Rights Project Community Law Centre, University of the Western Cape, who was also invited to participate.

arrangements between these institutions, which has involved visits to South Africa from staff of the University of Oslo (2004 and 2005), while in 2005 Norwegian students studied nutrition and dietetics modules for one semester at all three abovementioned universities in South Africa, one Norwegian masters student did field work for her thesis at UCT, and one student (from Stellenbosch) took a semester of elective courses at the University of Oslo.

During the visit, Professors Labadarios and Maunder and Dr Senekal gave lectures to the second- and third-year nutrition undergraduate students at the University of Oslo, made seminar presentations to Public Health Nutrition staff and students at

Rights at the University of Oslo. They also had the opportunity to discuss studies at their respective universities in South Africa with possible exchange of students for 2007. Meetings were also held with staff at all three centres to discuss possible further collaboration, which includes South African staff and student visits to the University of Oslo, research collaboration, as well as development of new teaching modules in the field of food in relation to human rights in collaboration with Mr Khoza.

During the visit, academic personnel of all these institutions were honoured to be invited to the South African Embassy in Oslo for consultations with the South African Ambassador, Ismail Coovardia.

Fresenius Kabi South Africa: Nutrition scholarships for undergraduate students

Fresenius Kabi South Africa (FKSA), whose core business is the supply of enteral and parenteral products, decided recently to establish a scholarship programme in dietetics. Three undergraduate students studying dietetics at South African universities that are affiliated to academic hospitals with a focus on clinical nutrition will be awarded scholarships annually. The scholarships will cover the costs relating to tuition, residence fees and text books for the duration of the undergraduate course, provided the awardees achieve satisfactory progress in their studies.

The scholarship programme aims to expand the number of clinical dietitians from disadvantaged backgrounds qualifying in South Africa each year, and thus increase the number of such professionals in this critically important profession.

A pilot project, establishing the qualifying criteria for the scholarship, was undertaken at Stellenbosch University, with just



Back (l. to r.): Mr Daniel Mosimanegape Stemmer (Ambassadorial Secretary), Dr Andrew Collins (University of Oslo), Dr Marjianne Senekal (University of Cape Town), Mr Hans Beukes. Front (l. to r.): Professor Demetre Labadarios (Stellenbosch University), Ambassador Ismail Coovardia, Professor Eleni Maunder (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Professor Wenche Eide (University of Oslo).

The visit to Oslo was facilitated by staff of the Department of Nutrition and financially supported by both the Faculty of Medicine and the University through its international programme. Its aim was to strengthen the current exchange

Akershus University College (HiAk) at Lillestrom (the latter facilitated by Professor Arne Oshaug), and Mr Khoza presented a seminar to staff and postgraduate students at the Norwegian Centre for Human



First recipients of the FKSA scholarships with members of FKSA's management and personnel of Human Nutrition, Stellenbosch University. Back (l. to r.): Mr R Kennedy, Mrs B Najaar and Professor M G Herselman (Human Nutrition, Stellenbosch), Mr B Salmon and Mrs V Hayward (FKSA). Front (l. to r.): Mr R Webb (FKSA), Ms N Mbolekwa (scholarship winner, Stellenbosch), Ms A Nel (FKSA), Ms W S September (scholarship winner, Stellenbosch), and Mrs Tandi Matoti-Mvalo, Mrs L M du Plessis and Professor D Labadarios (Human Nutrition, Stellenbosch).

two scholarships awarded in the pilot phase.

FKSA employs in excess of 500 people and locally supplies parenteral and enteral nutrition products to both the state and private sectors. FKSA possesses state-of-the-art facilities in Midrand, where the company's South African headquarters are situated, and in Port Elizabeth. These facilities have a nationwide distribution network enabling products to be compounded and delivered to patients on a same-day basis, as necessary.

The FKSA slogan 'Caring for Life', of which the scholarships in dietetics now form an integral part, has supported such worthy causes as the M T R Smit Children's Home, the Liebenhaus Children's Place of Safety, Lebone House and the AIDS Orphanage in KwaZulu-Natal.

FKSA is a member of the international German-based Fresenius Group with

an annual turnover exceeding €7.9 billion and more than a hundred thousand employees worldwide.

Feeding central to new strategy for child survival in Africa

Infant and young child feeding, including exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, micronutrient supplementation (particularly vitamin A, iron and iodine), and regular deworming throughout childhood, are at the heart of a new strategy to optimise child survival, growth and development and reduce mortality among children less than five years of age, that was adopted by the WHO regional committee for Africa at its last meeting in Addis Ababa in September.

The WHO estimates that infections are the main direct cause of child mortality in Africa, with, on average, 70% of child deaths in

the region – currently estimated at 4.6 million annually – attributable to a few mainly preventable causes, including acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea, measles, malnutrition and neonatal conditions such as suffocation, prematurity, and low birth weight. About 63% of current child mortality could be prevented if affordable interventions are implemented.

The objective of the strategy is to accelerate the reduction of neonatal and child mortality in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by achieving high population coverage using a defined set of effective interventions. To attain the MDGs, the region needs to increase its average annual mortality reduction rate to 8.2% per annum if the MDG related to child survival (Goal 4) is to be achieved.

Other essential interventions recommended for use in the strategy include promotion of newborn care, prevention of malaria using insecticide-treated nets and intermittent preventive treatment, immunisation of mothers and children, prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV, and management of common childhood illnesses.

Approaches for ensuring child survival outlined in the strategy document include advocating for harmonisation of child survival goals and agenda, strengthening health systems, empowering families and communities, forging operational partnerships, and the mobilisation of resources at all levels to scale up proven interventions.

Source: www.afro.who.int

New standards to protect consumers and ease trade in foodstuffs

New standards on the maximum allowable levels of a number of key contaminants and food additives have been adopted by the Codex

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Alimentarius Commission at its latest session in July.

Among these are the levels of lead and cadmium – lead being responsible for a wide range of disorders, including anaemia and hepatic and neurological disorders, and cadmium able to provoke kidney damage after long periods of exposure – in foods such as fish, seafood and rice.

Additionally, newly adopted codes of practice will give guidance to governments on how to prevent and reduce dioxins and aflatoxins – both of which are carcinogenic – in foodstuffs.

Many of the standards adopted will contribute to greater choice for consumers, while the establishment of international standards for several milk-based products and for instant noodles, for example, will facilitate their international trade.

Codex has also created a task force to address the issue of antimicrobial resistance in food of animal origin.

The Commission further addressed several organisational issues, including splitting the existing committee on food additives and contaminants because of its large workload into two new committees, the Codex committee on food

additives and the Codex committee on contaminants in food. China was designated as host of the food additives committee, as well as of the committee on pesticide residues, while the Netherlands was designated as host to the committee on contaminants in food.

Dr Claude J S Mosha (Tanzania) was re-elected as the chairperson of the Commission, and Karen Hulebak (USA), Noraini M Othman (Malaysia) and Wim Van Eck (Netherlands) were re-elected as the vice-chairpersons.

Source:

www.codexalimentarius.net