Introdution

The French Observatory of Food Quality (Oqali) was set up in February 2008 by the Ministries in charge of Agriculture, Health and Consumer Affairs. It is financed and supervised by the three ministries. The implementation is entrusted to INRA (French National Institute for Agronomic Research) and Afssa (French Food Safety Agency).

Objectives

The Observatory is part of the Public Health Policy

The Observatory is part of the French National Nutrition and Health Programme 2006-2010 (PNNS 2). The general objective of this programme consists in improving the state of health of the whole population by acting on the nutrition. Several action plans have been established aimed, on the one hand, at educating consumers and promoting guidelines to popularize the concept of a balanced diet and regular exercise and, on the other hand, at acting on the food supply and further encouraging the economics operators to improve the nutritional quality of their products.

The Observatory has been recommended in the workshops “Acting on the food supply” to monitor the global changes in the food supply by measuring differences and trends in the nutrient content of processed and packaged foodsstuff in relation to economic parameters in the French market. Oqali also provides tools to assess the effectiveness of the actions engaged by the food chain to improve nutritional quality. It represents an essential tool to meet public health challenges and consumer expectations on nutritional information.

Methods

For each category and type of brand, Oqali has analysed all the collected information to describe products characteristics: nutritional values have always been preserved. The main types of studies are Kruskal-Wallis test, boxplots, two-way scatterplots and multivariate statistics.

Importance of the partnership with the Food Professionals

The Observatory collaborates with manufacturers and retailers in the food chain. This partnership facilitates the collection of information and is a key importance for the validation of the methods used to aggregate and analyze the data. In addition, this collaboration allows a better description of the product groups and a more relevant choice of the published indicators.

Manufacturers, who provided data, will be able to remove them from the Oqali database if required. Oqali supplies specific analyses to the manufacturers in order to enable the comparison of their products with others in the same group. Manufacturers can use these analyses to promote their products and the partnership with the Observatory.

Conclusions and Perspectives

In conclusion, the nutrient content mainly differs according to categories of products and differences between types of brands are not systematic. Up to now, we have measured the nutritional quality of three groups of food products in 2008. However, every year, we keep on collecting data for these groups in order to monitor the evolution of their nutritional quality大厦ies in relation to different parameters. This represents the most interesting point of the Observatory.

The approach is continuously expanded to include additional product groups: pre-packed meat products; jams, stewed and canned fruits; juices and soft drinks; chocolate and chocolate-based products; prepared meals (chilled, frozen and canned); crackers and cocktail biscuits; bread-based products.

The final aim is to progressively monitor the nutritional quality of all products groups in the French diet.