The European Nutrient Database (ENDB) for nutritional epidemiology

Food composition databases (FCDB), as well as standardized calculation procedures are required for international studies on nutrition and disease to calculate nutrient intakes across countries. Comparisons of national FCDBs have shown that major improvements are needed in standardization and documentation at the food and nutrient levels to minimize systematic and random errors in nutrient intake estimations. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), together with national FCDB compilers, researchers in international studies (EURALIM, SENECA) and industry, is currently developing a standardized and critically assessed nutrient database for the 10 countries involved in the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC): Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Great Britain, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden. It will be compiled using the general concept for a standardized FCDB, food classification and description, and calculation procedures developed for EPIC. National compilers will provide and document a subset of their nutrient data and some will evaluate them. Updated 'Food Table Input' (FTI) software will be used to evaluate and compile the data. The European Nutrient Database (ENDB) will contain values for approximately 100 nutrients for 1000 foods per country, which is mainly derived from EPIC consumption data. In the future, this database could be extended to include more foods, components and countries. Additionally, methodological issues should be addressed elsewhere and awareness of the need for standardizing FCDBs and their procedures has to be increased among users and funding agencies.