ILSI SEA Region
Advancing Scientific Understanding for Public Health Impact

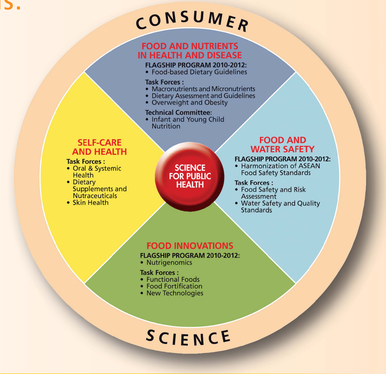
ILSI SEA Region is a regional branch of ILSI that covers a diverse geographical area in Asia and Oceania. Headquartered in Singapore, ILSI SEA Region co-ordinates and facilitates scientific programs, research, as well as knowledge and information dissemination in Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

Our Mission to Advance Scientific Understanding

Over 17 years of scientific undertakings, ILSI SEA Region has sought to improve scientific knowledge and understanding in areas related to nutrition, food safety, and health. By building a strong network of partnerships with many institutions and organizations, ILSI SEA Region remains committed to bringing cutting-edge science for public health impact in the region. We continue to strengthen our scientific resources by collaborating with leading scientists, research organizations and academic institutions in our region and globally.

Scientific Program

ILSI SEA Region's scientific program is organized and facilitated through its Science Clusters and Task Forces to achieve our key goals of **fostering harmonization in a diverse region, supporting community programs through research, building capacity through development of resources and trainings, and keeping pace with cutting-edge science to support science-based decision making**. Each of the Science Clusters covers strategic scientific issues and public health challenges. To maximize our impact, and strengthen our leadership role in key scientific areas, ILSI SEA Region has identified a Flagship Program under each of our Science Clusters with a 2-year framework of objectives, outputs and outcomes.



OUR LEADERS AND MANAGEMENT

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In addition, a panel of experts serves as advisors to the Scientific Clusters and Task Forces under which the branch's programs operate.

MEMBERS 2010-2011

- Abbott Nutrition
- Ajinomoto Co, Inc, ASEAN Headquarters
- AKZO Nobel Functional Chemicals Pte Ltd
- Almond Board of California
- Bayer CropScience Pty Ltd
- BASF East Asia Regional Headquarters Limited
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- Fonterra Co-operative Group Limited
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- Mead Johnson Nutrition (Thailand) Ltd
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- Simplot Australia Pty Ltd
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- Unilever Greater China East Asia - Australia New Zealand (GCEA-ANZ)
- Yeo Hiap Seng Ltd

2010 Highlights

*In 2010, ILSI SEA Region organized 2 successful meetings addressing emerging and promising areas of science – **Nutrition and Cognition**, and **Stacked Events in Genetically Modified Crops**. Interest in research and application in these 2 areas is increasing, but knowledge and expertise within Southeast Asia are still limited. By inviting international experts and scientists working in these fields to share their expertise and experiences, and to interact and exchange ideas with key stakeholders in the region, we have provided effective platforms for advancing scientific understanding for the improvement of public health.*

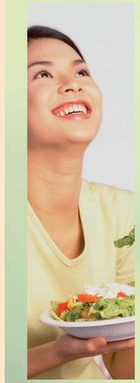
Biotechnology

The next generation of genetically modified (GM) crops on the market will mainly consist of those containing multiple, or 'stacked', transgenic traits. Within this context, how will ASEAN countries deal with the risk assessment for these new products? What is the science behind stacked events? What are the scientific considerations for safety assessment?

To answer some of these questions, in September 2010, ILSI Southeast Asia Region organized a series of back-to-back seminars on **Science and Regulatory Perspectives on Stacked Events in Genetically Modified Crops** in Bangkok, Thailand and Jakarta, Indonesia. The seminars were organized in collaboration with the ILSI International Food Biotechnology Committee (IFBiC), bringing international scientific experts working on stacked events issues to the region. These experts were able to share the latest scientific thinking in relation to the safety assessment of GM crops containing stacked events, as well as the analytical solutions currently available.

In addition, the seminars provided an opportunity for regulators in the region to share thoughts and exchange ideas on developing science-based approaches for the assessment of stacked GM products. Countries that have had experience in dealing with stacked GM products, such as the Philippines and Australia, were also invited to share their perspectives.

As the development and commercialization for the next generation of GM crops accelerates going into the future, it will continue to be necessary to share the latest credible science on GM-related topics within the Southeast Asian region.



Nutrition and Cognition

Nutrition in early life is crucial for cognitive development and may substantially influence cognitive performance later in life. Increased longevity in many societies has also heightened the need to maintain cognitive performance and prevent cognitive degeneration for healthy ageing.

An increasing amount of research, including in Southeast Asia, has been carried out to elucidate the role of nutrition on cognition. However, the complexity of cognition involving the different domains and the many influencing factors requires one to carefully consider the appropriate assessment methods. To facilitate sharing and support such research in the region, ILSI SEA Region organized a **Symposium on Nutrition and Cognition: Towards Research and Application for Different Life Stages** in October 2010, Malaysia. The symposium successfully shared the latest research findings in this field, highlighted current methodologies in assessing cognitive functions, and issues relating to scientific substantiation of claims and consumer understanding in the area of nutrition and cognition.

Speakers and organizers of the symposium

Participants at the symposium session

Cognitive assessment tools must be able to sensitively and selectively measure changes due to nutritional influences. Additionally, their applicability and validity must be met through appropriate adaptation and tailoring to socio-cultural environment of the target groups and the research need. Collaboration between nutritionists, psychologists and neurologist is very important for research in this area.

Preparation of the meeting report for publication is underway to share the meeting outcomes to a wider audience. A training workshop on assessment of cognitive function is also being planned for 2011 to increase research capability in the region.