

## MARKING IMPORTANT MILESTONES AT OUR 15TH ANNUAL MEETING

On April 18 and 19, 2008, ILSI SEA Region's members, scientific directors, advisors and guests from Australia, Southeast Asia, China, Japan, USA and Europe gathered for this year's Annual General Meeting at the Holiday Inn Atrium Hotel, Singapore. It was a day of celebration since this year also marks ILSI SEA Region's 15th year of productive and meaningful existence.

Mrs Boon Yee Yeong, ILSI SEA Region Executive Director, welcomed everybody while Mr. Howard Delaney, President of ILSI SEA Region Executive Committee opened the meeting with a call to order. Having served with distinction for 14 years, Mr Delaney also announced that he would step down as President but will continue to serve as member-at large of the Executive Committee.

ILSI SEA Region's new President is Mr Geoffrey Smith, Global Director, Health Chelates of Akzo Nobel. Mr Smith previously served as Secretary as well as Honorary Secretary of the Executive Committee. The Assembly of Members also welcomed those who will now be the office bearers, members at-large of the Executive Committee, Board of Directors (see box) for 2008 – 2009 and the Panel of Scientific Advisers.

Marking this milestone in the branch's history, Mrs Yeong opened the session on "Perspectives: 15 Years of Science for Public Health" by gratefully acknowledging the significant contributions of all those who have been a part of ILSI SEA Region's birth pains and growing years. In particular, she paid tribute to Mr. Delaney for his long



years of dedicated service to ILSI SEA Region, who reciprocated by thanking everybody who helped and supported him throughout his presidency. He also expressed confidence that with Mr. Smith at the helm, ILSI SEA Region will reach greater heights. Mr. Smith, together with several long-standing directors of ILSI SEA Region, then shared their thoughts on the future challenges and opportunities for the organization. Mr. Smith's vision for the coming years is a more dynamic, productive and visible ILSI SEA Region branch as the organization works towards strengthening its on-going programs and partnerships but at the same time trail blazing in new emerging issues that confront the region.



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## SCIENTIFIC SESSION OF THE 15TH ANNUAL MEETING:

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FOR THE WORLD'S FOOD SUPPLY

A key highlight of this year's Annual Meeting was the scientific session that focused on a very relevant and timely topic entitled: Challenges and Solutions for the World's Food Supply. Insightful presentations were made by Mr. Peter S. Hojkskov of Food and Agriculture Organization - Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP) and Dr. Sakarindr Bhumiratana of National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA), Thailand. Mr Hojkskov addressed Global Challenges in Biosecurity and Food Safety - Impact on Health, while Dr Bhumiratana talked about the Impact of Molecular Sciences and Climate Changes on Future Food and Nutrition Trends.

***“Developing countries should have the choice to live like the developed world, with the same life expectancy and dreams. The challenge is to do this more resource efficiently. We can work together intelligently so we can all grow and benefit together.” Dr S. Bhumiratana***



*Mr Peter Hojkskov*

Mr. Hojkskov provided information on trends and challenges related to food security. In particular, he delved on the reasons why food prices are on the rise and its effect on food security. He moved to explain the link between food security and food safety stating that food availability is not sufficient and food safety must also be taken into account. He likewise identified the emerging issues on food safety and regulatory approaches to address food safety issues, considerations and benefits of biosecurity and the support FAO is providing for Asia along this area.

Dr Bhumiratana started his presentation by sharing some projections for the coming century in terms of fresh water resources, ecosystems, food and coastal system. The future is not all that promising as climate change will continue to impact negatively on all these. However, science and technology if harnessed in such a way that benefits are high and risks are low can in fact help address some of the impending threats brought about by climate change specifically on food.

He also shared that food production is undergoing a revolution via the art of innovation. The drivers for food production are opportunities, competition, customers' increasing concern for health and safety and lifestyle changes as well as market for technology. For the latter, he discussed nutrigenomics, biotechnology and nanotechnology and how these technologies are changing the way we use and look at food.

Wrapping up the 15th Annual Meeting on 19 April, each of ILSI SEA Region's Country Committees (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand) and Country Office (Australasia) gave their updates on accomplishments and planned activities until end 2008. The Board of Directors and Scientific Advisory Panel also conducted a session to discuss and reinforce ILSI SEA Region's key drivers for the next 5 years, namely Harmonization, Capacity-Building, and Research.

The last 15 years of ILSI SEA Region ushered in new developments for the global ILSI Network. A more in depth understanding of the needs and issues concerning nutrition, health and food safety of the Southeast Asian region complemented by strong and viable partnerships with local scientists, government and industry have led to the development and implementation of a regional scientific strategy that is anchored on three pillars.



These pillars are: fostering harmonization in a diverse region, supporting community programs through research and building capacity through training.

ILSI SEA Region is now poised to meet the challenges of the coming years. While it will continue to undertake some of its early initiatives, ILSI SEA Region now sees itself becoming more active in the areas of capacity-building. The Region is endowed with so many promising young scientists just waiting to be tapped and given the opportunities for full expression of their talents. ILSI SEA Region will not only facilitate capacity-building of these young scientists and researchers but will pursue innovative strategies for mentoring them. Needs-oriented training programs will be developed as we build our knowledge base of what the region needs in terms of scientific/research capability and leadership. Funding for these capacity-building initiatives will be vigorously pursued.

Communications will play an important role in our future undertakings. Not only ILSI SEA Region will work for a wider dissemination of the scientific information being made available

## FAST FORWARD: MEETING FUTURE CHALLENGES

*“...ILSI SEA Region will work for a wider dissemination of the scientific information being made available constantly and greater attention will be given to translating the science into a language that would inform consumers and help them make better and healthier decisions for themselves and their families.”*

constantly and greater attention will be given to translating the science into a language that would inform consumers and help them make better and healthier decisions for themselves and their families. The development of user-friendly website and newsflash will be high on its priority. It will remain steadfast in ensuring that only science-based information are communicated to the public.

Equally important is maintaining a more open and vibrant communication line between and among the members of the ILSI SEA Regional branch and between the branch and ILSI Global office. This is vital if ILSI Global is to be continuously informed of the dynamic changes and their implications taking place in the Region.

ILSI SEA Region will not only continue

to support national, regional and international fora/meetings for dialogue and discussion of relevant and timely themes but also emerging issues on nutrition, health, consumer science and food safety among others but will also work for the publication of the important decisions/consensus arrived at during these fora. More and more, these meetings will provide neutral platforms for open dialogues among different stakeholders.

Beyond the talking is the need for action that spells the big difference. ILSI SEA Region will actively seek to partner with institutions in and outside of the ILSI network to pilot test innovative strategies for addressing public health issues. It will take a more proactive stance by anticipating problems likely to emerge based on current trends.



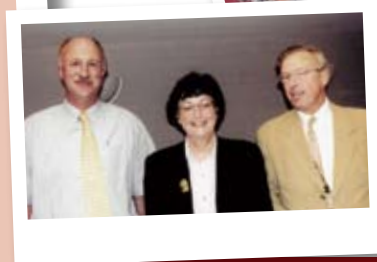
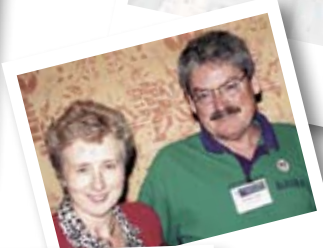
# REWIND: EVOLUTION OF ILSI, THE ORGANIZATION

To date, after 30 years of existence ILSI has grown into a strong organization with 15 branches worldwide, a Research Foundation (RF), and a Health and Environmental Sciences Institute (HESI). Its tripartite partnership model has provided a neutral platform for the scientists from academia, industry, international organizations like FAO-UN, PAHO and WHO and governments. ILSI partners with scientists from around the world who are in the forefront of science. ILSI gatherings are also the meeting place for various stakeholders that have spurred the expansion of relevant scientific knowledge with far-reaching health and nutrition benefits to the consumers everywhere. By consensus-building, ILSI's harmonization efforts in various areas like Recommended Dietary Allowances, Food Safety Standards etc. paved the way for meaningful collaborative work. Through the years, ILSI has not only led the way but has been an indispensable partner towards advancing science particularly where help is most needed.

- ▶ **1978** Birth of ILSI, a non-profit worldwide foundation
- ▶ **1981** ILSI Japan (first branch formed)
- ▶ **1983** ILSI Australia
- ▶ **1984** ILSI Research Foundation
- ▶ **1985** ILSI Nutrition Foundation (now ILSI North America)  
ILSI Risk Science Institute (RSI)
- ▶ **1986** ILSI Europe
- ▶ **1988** ILSI gained NGO status with official relations with WHO
- ▶ **1989** ILSI Health and Environmental Sciences Institute (HESI)
- ▶ **1990** ILSI Argentina
- ▶ **1991** ILSI Brazil  
ILSI Mexico
- ▶ **1993** ILSI Southeast Asia  
ILSI Thailand  
ILSI China Focal point
- ▶ **1995** ILSI Korea
- ▶ **1997** ILSI India  
ILSI North Andean  
ILSI North Africa and Gulf Region  
ILSI South Africa  
ILSI South Andean
- ▶ **1998** ILSI Center for Health Promotion
- ▶ **2002** **ILSI SEA Region** brought ILSI Australia, ILSI SEA and ILSI Thailand together
- ▶ **2005** ILSI RSI and ILSI CHP became part of ILSI Research Foundation



Work in the areas of food safety, risk assessment, toxicology, environment, dietary recommendations, iron and Vitamin A metabolism and deficiencies, allergenicity, immunity, functional foods, and obesity prevention and control among others did not only result to publications that are used as reference materials but have also been translated to responsive programs for national or community implementation.



# LANDMARK CONTRIBUTIONS OF ILSI, THROUGH THE YEARS



Now in its 30th year, ILSI - through its network of branches and scientists worldwide - celebrates its contributions to nutrition and public health.

- **1978** Caffeine technical committee established; 27 years of work and over 200 publication since have led to the establishment of standards and guidelines for funding research by ILSI.
- **1981** First seminar on histopathology led to the standardization of histopathology evidence from chemical and food additive safety studies.

The publication of the First Volume of Catalog of Food Colors led to harmonization of approved colors, food additives and nutrition labeling.
- **1983** Three volumes on Catalog of Food Colors completed – to this day these documents remain as reference documents worldwide.

First Volume on ILSI Monograph Series on the Pathology of Laboratory Animals was published. Series led to Standardization of Study of Adverse Effects in Laboratory Animals.
- **1984** Awarding of research grants led to advancements in the understanding of basic human biology.
- **1985** Started work on understanding risk assessment:  
Partnered with USAID (specifically, INACG and IVACG) to collaborate on publications on micronutrient deficiency and two major reference materials namely, Nutrition Reviews and Present Knowledge in Nutrition.
- **1986** 143 research awards have resulted in generation of new scientific knowledge on interpretation of toxicology and epidemiology in risk assessment, exposure assessment methods, characterization of dose-response and risk communication, among others.
- **1989** HESI and ILSI worked for the adoption of Mode of Action (MOA) as a framework for determining whether carcinogenic effects on mouse liver was relevant to humans.
- **1991** Monograph Series on various topics with maiden issue on “Dietary Starches and Sugars in Man: A Comparison” opened doors for communicating scientific information to the general population. A total of 27 publications, translated in several languages, have been produced under this series.

Start of work on development of a framework for determining cancer dose-response which laid the foundations for “Principles for the Selection of Doses for Chronic Rodent Bioassays”.

First International Conference on Aging brought to the attention of many scientists the nutrient needs of the elderly population.
- **1992** International Symposium on Cholera along with two other workshops provided the scientific bases for water disinfection.

ILSI SEA launched a program “Trimmer Generation” intended to halt the increasing trend on obesity among children.

ILSI drew attention to the scarcity of information regarding food allergy and started work on regulatory decisions on low dose exposure to known food allergens.



- 1995** First International Conference on East-West perspectives on Functional Foods brought worldwide attention to different approaches to scientific evidence used to support health claims for food components.
- 1996** Started discussions on role of packaging in food safety and quality which remains of active interest to many.
- 1997** Initial work on harmonization of food safety regulations in the Americas paved the way for similar initiatives in the other regions.  
ILSI SEA took an active role in research and national efforts to develop iron-fortified products in Asia.
- 1998** Work on functional foods started and will extend beyond 2008.
- 1999** Project IDEA (Iron Deficiency Elimination Action) provided a model for evidence-based approaches to developing public health strategies that work.  
Take 10<sup>®</sup>, a classroom-based tool, introduced by ILSI Center for Health Promotion and now in use in classrooms across the USA.
- 2000** Development of a single, integrated Food Safety and Standards Act for SAARC countries was spearheaded by ILSI India.  
ILSI SEA developed a science-based resource tool for school interventions Powerkids™ Eat Smart and On-the-Go education models. This is now in use in Singapore schools and has been tested for adoption in Thailand and Indonesia.  
ILSI SEA pursued harmonization of food safety standards in 10 Asian countries.  
ILSI India established guidelines on management of Type 2 diabetes with Indian Council for Medical Research of the Ministry of Health.
- 2002** ILSI partnered with FAO-UN to provide technical assistance to developing countries on regulatory systems in response to GATT agreement.  
ILSI Europe published the first of a series of papers from the FOSIE Concerted Action Programmes Food Safety in Europe : risk assessment of chemicals in food and diet. This work eventually became a model for large multi-country projects with EU funding.
- 2003** Completion of work on alternatives to carcinogenicity testing of pharmaceutical and chemical agents.  
Launched Health Lifestyles, Healthy People program with PAHO and US CDC to evaluate community intervention projects to reduce the risk for obesity.
- 2005** Development of pragmatic, risk-based recommendations on strategies for reducing food borne listeriosis by a 37 member international panel.  
ILSI Japan launched Project SWAN (Safe Water and Nutrition) with funding from JICA to establish operational models to supply clean water and improve hygiene and sanitation practices in rural areas of Vietnam.
- 2007** ILSI India published Nutrition and Hydration guidelines for Excellence and Sports Performance and is now being implemented by Sports Authority of India.  
ILSI IFBic published guidelines on appropriate conduct of animal studies to evaluate the efficacy of crops genetically modified for output traits.  
ILSI RF published an authoritative and comprehensive database of human physiological parameters for early life stages.  
Completion of work on three-tiered testing approach for assessing the safety of crop protection chemicals which resulted in re-designing of the testing framework and had the potential of harmonizing data on toxicological testing.

# HARMONIZATION OF FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS: WORK IN PROGRESS

Last May 15 and 16, 2008, the 7th of a series of ASEAN Food Safety Harmonization Workshop was jointly organized by ILSI SEA Region and the Food and Quality Safety Division of the Ministry of Health, Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It was attended by participants representing regulatory bodies, academia, scientists and industry, from around the ASEAN Region.

An update was given by Dr. Sadahiko Ogihara, chair of ILSI SEA Region Food Safety and Risk Assessment Task Force, on the progress made since the last workshop held in Vietnam in February 2007. The on-line ASEAN Food Database currently includes 22 preservatives, 17 colourings and six sweeteners. However, he stressed that the work is far from completed. There is still an urgent need to continue the harmonization process to meet CODEX standards. ILSI SEA Region is working closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO-UN) and World Health Organization (WHO) toward meeting this harmonization objective. Dr. Aziman Rosman of the ASEAN Working Group on Food Safety underscored the importance of the on-going efforts on harmonization particularly from the perspective of economic integration, trade liberalization and investments. He proposed that people in the ASEAN region should aim for “One Standard, One Test, and Accepted Everywhere!”

Highlights of the workshop included country presentations from Indonesia, Laos PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam that dealt with recent developments in-country as well as harmonizing national food safety standards with Codex Alimentarius. All countries agreed to use CODEX as benchmark for harmonization, but recognized that this may pose some challenges to countries which do not possess the infrastructure for establishing and enforcing food safety standards. The

issues or problems that most countries cited related to enforcement, such as limited capacity and resources, and the use of different standards, risk assessment methodologies.

The session on microbial food safety management served as a venue for sharing regional regulations on Microbial Control in Southeast Asia as well as comparing these regulations with European Union (EU). Dr Mathew Lau of Siliker Pte Ltd, Singapore briefed the participants on the various microbial standards in Southeast Asia for milk and milk products as well as meat and meat products. To date, there are more than 400 different values for microbial standards in the region which present a major challenge for harmonization. He also discussed the FAO/WHO Report on South East Asia (2002) which stated that food legislations in the region urgently need updating and revisions, and will have to take into account CODEX standards and the FAO/WHO model food law. Moreover, specific recommendations include the use of International Commission



***“Risk Communication is the exchange of information and opinions concerning risk and risk-related factors among risk assessors, risk managers, consumers and other interested parties.” (CODEX definition)***

on Microbiological Specifications for Foods (ICMSF) Framework, the formal risk analysis approach (which include Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP), Food Safety Objective (FSO) and Performance Objective (PO). For the World Trade Organization's Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures, key areas identified include Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), Pesticides, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and Traceability. He concluded by stressing the advantages of having a system like the EU system where food safety criteria are set as well

as process hygiene criteria. Such a system will eventually lead to reduction in the gap between quality and safety requirements for export and domestic sale and ultimately benefit the general population and visitors of a country.

Obviously, having harmonized criteria for food safety results in a WIN-WIN situation for both consumers and industry. While the system safeguards the quality and safety of foods domestically sold it also enhances the chances of the industry to meet international standards for trade.

***“Nothing beats good communication” was also a take home message for the participants. Scientists should talk to government officials, researchers should talk to media and while the consumers depend on the media for information, media should practice responsible journalism. There was a consensus that risk, perceived differently, should be communicated with caution so as not to create public hysteria.***



### What lies ahead?

Definitely so much still needs to be done. Development of an ASEAN Common Indigenous Food Category recognized by CODEX to be listed in the GSFA food category system has been identified as one of the priority areas to work on. This is also expected to support the traditional foods from ASEAN member states and enable these foods to enter the global trade market. Additional food additives and contaminants (e.g. heavy metals) have to be added to the ASEAN Food Safety Standards Database to make it even more useful to the regulators and industry. The collection and collation of exposure assessment data of food additives and/or contaminants as well as microbial could be other areas for the working groups to focus on.

Plans for a workshop in 2009 to continue the dialogue between and among ASEAN countries are already underway and sessions devoted on relevant topics have been incorporated in the upcoming 5th Asian Conference on Food and Nutrition Safety this November 5-7, 2008.

## ILSI SEA REGION, ILSI INTERNATIONAL FOOD BIOTECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE (IFBIC) AND Ngee ANN POLYTECHNIC JOINED FORCES TO GET DOWN TO BRASS-TACKS: GM SAMPLING AND DETECTION

ILSI SEA Region, in collaboration with ILSI IFBiC, Ngee Ann Polytechnic and Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) of Singapore held a Regional Symposium and Training Workshop on Sampling and Detection Methods for Genetically Modified (GM) Seed, Grain and Food last 27-29 March 2008 in Singapore. The program aimed to promote a better understanding of sampling and detection methods of GM plants, seeds, grains and foods throughout the food supply chain. Moreover, a hands-on laboratory practicum, a first in the long list of workshops and seminars organized by ILSI SEA Region, was an integral part of the workshop. This novel approach proved to be engaging and very useful to those who attended.



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Over the years, the scientific community has amassed a wealth of information about this widely discussed topic and advances in concepts and tools particularly sampling and analytical techniques. A group of distinguished scientists were invited to set the platform for understanding the principles behind sampling and detection and currently accepted regional and international standards.

For a regional perspective, Dr. Paul Chiew, of AVA Singapore, informed the participants of latest updates on the ASEAN GMO Laboratory Network. Presently, it is composed of GMO Regulatory Systems in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei Darussalam and Myanmar while still under development in Laos PDR and Cambodia. He also

shared the genesis of the network as well as an assessment of national capacities for sampling and detection stating that they vary from countries with underdeveloped laboratory assessment capacity to countries with fully developed laboratory capacity. To date, a laboratory quality assurance system is already in place and inter-laboratory proficiency schemes in the UK, US and EU are now available.

*“The subject of Genetically-Modified Organisms (GMO) has been a subject of interest not just in the Southeast Asian region but worldwide.”*





Dr. Anne Bridges, chair of American Association of Cereal Chemists (AACC) International Approved Methods Technical Committee and co-chair of the AACC International Biotechnology Methods Committee shared, on the other hand, the international perspectives regarding sampling and detection. From 1995 to 2007, the global regulatory situation has improved with more research field trials being approved. However, there are still key scientific challenges to be overcome like food allergy, new methods for safety assessment, molecular characterization, harmonized/validated detection methods and increasing requirements for data like environmental and health effects, among others.

Dr. Ray Shillito, chair of the USA Technical Advisory Group to International Standards Organization (ISO) on standards for GMO testing provided an in-depth understanding of ISO, and Codex Alimentarius Commission (CODEX) from the organogram to who are responsible for developing the methods to the voting procedures and work flow to laboratory accreditation. He also informed the group of the published standards like ISO/TS 21098 which define the process and ISO 17025 which specifies laboratory standards.

Presentations on developing agricultural and biotechnology methods, protein detection methods, quantitative as well as qualitative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) in GMO detection were explained in depth. How do we meet standards that allow trade of goods? Validation and proficiency testing are key to trade. These ensure that a measurement made in one country or laboratory yield the same results when measurement on the same shipment



The ILSI International Food Biotechnology Committee (IFBiC) was established in 1997 to support the development and harmonization of science-based regulations around the world for biotechnology-derived food products and to disseminate science-based information regarding the safety assessment of these products to governments, industry, academia, and other interested groups around the world.

IFBiC's key activities are education and outreach, with particular focus on:

- Training Workshops on Safety and Risk Assessment of GM Foods and Feeds;
- Training Workshops on Sampling and Detection Methods for GM Foods; and
- Biotechnology-derived Nutritious Foods for Developing Countries: Needs, Opportunities and Barriers.

is performed in another country or laboratory. Reference materials are also very important components of sampling and detection. Unfortunately, there is a gap between what is ideal, which is to have single reference material that acts in the same manner as all samples and practical (a small set of reference materials that cover the situation for all samples), and the reality which is there are just too many different types of samples to achieve either or both the ideal or practical.

A nice segue to the hands-on laboratory workshop was the session on applications of GMO detection methods in foods and feed supply chain. This session also included a presentation on the design and management of a GMO Testing Laboratory emphasizing

that for such a laboratory, procedures are just as important as the operators and researchers. There should be areas and equipment dedicated for this type of analysis and continuous monitoring of the analytical performance is equally vital to avoid contamination.

A one and half day hands-on laboratory session was included in this training workshop to address the needs of people who are directly involved in laboratory testing. Specific training areas focused on critical sampling criteria, detection methodologies using DNA-based and Protein-based Protocols.

For more information regarding the topics presented, please visit: [www.gmworkshop08.com](http://www.gmworkshop08.com)

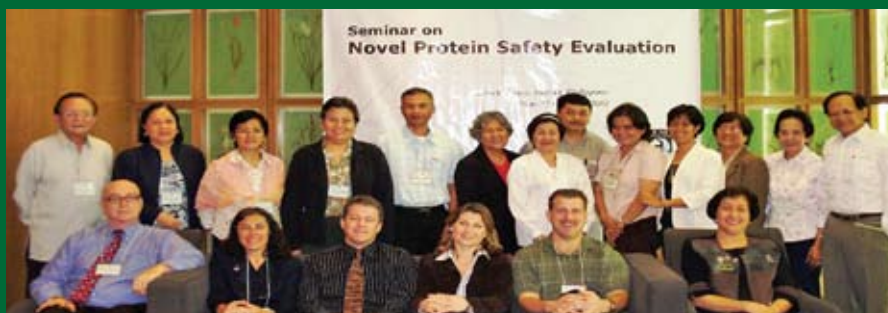
Both meetings served as venues for updating scientists on current state of science on conducting safety assessments of novel proteins with emphasis on allergenicity as well as explore possibilities for future collaborations with Asian scientists.

First meeting was held in Tokyo, Japan with ILSI Japan co-hosting the said activity last February 21, 2008. Representatives from HESI PATC informed the delegates of their recent activities, including sequence homology/bioinformatics assessments, serum screening, impact of food processing and new methods (including animal models). The Japanese scientists likewise shared their on-going researches in the field of allergen database development, serum screening and analysis of allergens and allergenome of fish and rice. Opportunities for collaborations with scientists from Japan's National Institute of Health Sciences (NIHS) were also explored during the second day of the meeting and a number of promising possibilities were identified.

HESI PATC and ILSI SEA Region jointly organized a similar meeting in Manila, Philippines on Novel Protein Safety Evaluation. Held last February 26-27, 2008, the seminar attracted scientists from academia, government and industry. On top of the topics presented in Japan, representatives of the HESI PATC also presented the overview of food safety assessment of genetically modified crops, biochemical properties of allergens and current approach for conducting a toxicological safety assessment of a novel protein.

An update on food safety in the Philippines was likewise given by representatives from the Philippines, highlighting the priority given to novel protein safety evaluation. Important conclusions arrived at during the meeting include:

## ILSI HESI COMES TO ASIA: MEETINGS IN JAPAN AND THE PHILIPPINES



*“Two important scientific outreach activities were conducted by ILSI HESI’s Protein Allergenicity technical Committee (PATC) in partnership with ILSI regional branches in Asia last February, 2008.”*

- Safety assessments require a multifaceted approach i.e. one that requires molecular, protein, host, food, feed, agronomic, substantial evidence etc.;
  - Weight-of-evidence approach is necessary for evaluating potential allergenicity of novel proteins; and
  - Harmonization of requirements/studies for novel protein safety evaluation across geographies is highly desirable.
- Potential areas of collaboration identified include: improving laboratory testing (e.g. training and capacity-building), food safety assessments of next generation crops, improving safety assessments of combined events/high order stacked traits and of cloned animals, GM animals and GM fish; and harmonization of biosafety regulations with Asian countries using OECD/CODEX guidelines.

### ILSI Health and Environmental Sciences Institute

HESI is a global branch of ILSI that provides an international forum to advance the understanding of scientific issues related to human health, toxicology, risk assessment, and the environment.

Its mission is to stimulate and support scientific research and educational programs that contribute to the identification and resolution of health and environmental issues of concern to the public, scientific community, government agencies, and industry.

HESI draws its membership from the chemical, agrochemical, petrochemical, pharmaceutical, biotechnology and consumer products industries, with current member companies based in the United States, Europe, and Japan.



## ILSI SEA REGION LOOKS AT CONSUMER SCIENCE: UPDATES FROM AUSTRALASIA

A conference on Influencing Consumer Food Behavior was organized by ILSI Australasia last July 15, 2008 in Sidney, Australia. This meeting, which is part of ILSI SEA Region's effort on regional scientific knowledge development in Consumer Science, focused on the extent that claims and food labels influence consumer food buying behavior.

Professor Adam Drenowski from the University of Washington, USA started by saying that "obesity is the toxic consequence of living in a challenged economic environment, i.e. poverty leads to obesity." He moved on to explain what he meant by explaining the role of taste, energy density, cost, convenience, health and variety on diets.

Genetically speaking, we are predisposed to eat energy dense foods to reduce the amount of effort needed to keep us alive. However, these do not tend to contribute to other requirements particularly the micronutrients. In terms of cost per calorie, energy dense foods are

cheaper, and are thus preferred by those with limited purchasing power. The fast -paced life has also resulted to a higher demand for convenience foods giving rise to fast food mania.

Based on some studies, he stressed that tackling obesity may require more than labels and media, in fact more important would be the structural reforms that can have more sustainable impact.

What is on a label? Lisa Miles (Consultant) argued that the value of information on the label depends on the nutrition knowledge and we still have a long way to go in terms of nutrition education. Consumers already know about nutritional requirements but the

challenge is how to change consumer behavior. The importance of having a holistic approach and keeping abreast with developments in nutrition science was also emphasized. The dietary information being disseminated appear to add to confusion such that the concomitant changes in the way people look at food i.e. wellness rather than health do not go hand in hand. As the public gets bombarded with too much information on the labels (oftentimes too technical and not useful for meal planning), the consumer still prefers to get simple messages as demonstrated by the success of the Australia Heart Foundation's Tick program.



Dr Trevor Webb and Ms Mariane Hoey, both of Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), informed the delegates of increasing focus on public health and shared evidences for the need for a well conducted consumer research to replace guesswork which for quite some time have been supporting regulation development. On the other hand, Ms Hoey talked on how on-pack nutritional information can affect one's intent to purchase. She supported Dr Webb's argument that a good consumer research can help better inform regulatory bodies.

Nutrient profiling was also examined in terms of its ability to influence consumer behavior. Prof Drenowski presented the requirements for good nutrition profiles which would be: consumer science-based, objective, simple, balanced, validated, and transparent and consumer- driven. An assessment of current schemes for evaluating foods identified the

problems like: assessing absence rather than nutrients present, serving portion vs. per 100g.

The genesis of his work on nutrient profiling started when he was challenged to develop a scientifically valid definition for nutrient density. Nutrient profiling, to date, has been determined by balancing energy density (energy per unit weight) and nutrient density (the amount of nutrients per calorie). Using different models, he was able to evaluate different ways of looking at food values and validated these against a healthy diet. Currently, Prof Drenowski is working on a Nutrient Rich Foods Index, based on nutrients to encourage and nutrients to limit to evaluate dietary behavior. He concluded by saying that nutrient profiling assists in evaluating dietary behavior and nutritional outcomes but is less effective for classifying individual foods and their contribution to overall diet.

Gillian O' Sullivan of AC Nielsen enlightened the delegates by what really influence shoppers' behavior. Foods are bought for a variety of reasons like habit, price, offers variety or is new. But there are also external factors that influence purchasing habits. These include ethical, health and well-being, convenience or practicality, indulgence and pleasure and the more recent drivers, "cosmeceuticals" and food miles.

A paper on different ways of looking at food choice behavior was presented by David Cox of Commonwealth Scientific and Research Organization (CSIRO). He delved on the attributes of food both nutritionally and from a sensory point of view as well as how psychological, sociological and economic factors help develop the consumer's attitude toward making an initial food purchase and more importantly repeat purchase.

Take home messages from the meeting included: There are many influences on customer's purchasing behavior, and product claims and labels are only one of the many variables. Tools are being developed to better understand the decision-making process and measure the impact of various influences. Categorizing foods allows the study of consumer behavior in response to a wide variety of stimuli, but objective food categorization has still a long way to go. Lastly, while influencing consumer food behavior is a difficult process, requisite to achieving this goal is the consumer's willingness to change.



## MR HOWARD DELANEY – HIGHLIGHTS AND DEFINING MOMENTS WITH ILSI SEA REGION

**M**r Howard Delaney has worked actively with ILSI SEA Region since its inception, and served as the branch's President for 14 years from 1994 to 2008. As a representative of one of ILSI SEA Region's founding members, Mr Delaney has been closely involved with the organization's development, and a major force in its expansion. Mr Delaney now serves as one of the member directors of the organization.

**Question (Q) :** *Having served as President of ILSI SEA Region for the past 14 years, what were the defining moments in terms of scientific impact during your term?*

**Howard Delaney (HD):** There are a number of defining moments in ILSI SEA Region's history as an organization, but let me share with you three that I believe not only put ILSI SEA Region on the map of ILSI the global organization but which has also established ILSI SEA Region as an organization dedicated to promoting good science.

The first one is when we organized our first symposium on childhood obesity. With only ten members and a newly established secretariat, we embarked on an activity that saw, for the first time, international experts and top level government officials like those from the Singapore Ministry of Health coming together to discuss the very important topic of obesity. The success of the meeting, largely because of the able management of Mrs Boon Yee Yeong and the support from the members and ILSI North America, demonstrated the branch's capability in handling high level regional meetings.

Then, in 1995 we organized an international conference on East-West Perspectives in Functional Foods. With over 400 delegates from all over the world and with tremendous financial support needed, we were again able to prove to the world that ILSI SEA Region can rise up to the challenge of organizing a meeting of such proportion and this has earned us the respect of many.

The third was when we organized ILSI's first Nutrigenomics conference in December 2005. The preparation for this meeting took longer but it was also the first time that we were going to deal with an emerging science. We managed to bring together a group of world class scientists and raised enough interest to have a very good meeting.

This time ILSI SEA Region was able to further establish its clout as a top-notch meeting organizer even for new scientific disciplines like nutrigenomics.

**Q:** *The success stories that you just mentioned definitely did not happen by chance. What do you think were the key elements that contributed to the success of those undertakings?*

**HD:** There were three key elements that contributed to the success of those landmark events. One is a well-functioning and resourceful secretariat; two - the regional structure of our branch and three - dynamic partnerships.

**Q:** *Can you please explain further what you mean by "regional structure" and partnerships?*

**HD:** Allow me to backtrack a little. Originally, ILSI SEA Region was composed only of Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia. We had very good partners from these countries but there was a feeling that we were a bit disjointed so then we worked for the merging of other countries within Southeast Asia. Soon Australia was roped in followed by Thailand and the rest was history. ILSI SEA Region now covers the 10 countries of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), Australia and New Zealand.

**Q:** *How were you able to convince others that this was the way to go?*

**HD:** Fortunately, it was not difficult. Most of the members, particularly those from the industry, already have corporate offices that covered the whole region, so it seemed logical that as a regional organization, we should also follow a similar scheme. We also reorganized that there are public health issues that cut across many countries in Asia despite the diversity. Administratively speaking, we are also fortunate to have a secretariat that is capable of managing and coordinating a multi-country membership.

**Q:** *And what about the dynamic partnerships, how has this contributed to ILSI SEA Region's success?*

**HD:** I believe what has brought about the dynamic and mutually benefitting partnerships that we have in ILSI SEA Region is the high level of interest, engagement and involvement of dedicated individuals from all our partner institutions, be it industry, scientific organizations, academia, international organizations and others.

As a result of these partnerships, we have been able to undertake projects that we believe could make a big difference in terms of addressing key public health issues like the iron fortification program we have in the Philippines (with rice fortification) and now in Cambodia (soy sauce fortification) and Vietnam (fish sauce fortification). This project is also a good example of our partnership with other ILSI entities, namely CHP Japan.

Another good feature of ILSI SEA Region is that we can act fast and be innovative in our approach.

**Q:** *Is there any message(s) you would like to give to ILSI SEA Region partners?*

**HD:** I hope that ILSI SEA Region will continue to build on its strengths, one of which is the feeling that when you are a part of ILSI SEA Region you are part of a family. As a family, we share goals and responsibilities, so we all play a very supportive role and we provide assistance in any way we can.

ILSI SEA Region has shown dynamism through the years. With good financial support, active membership, a professional and effective secretariat, ILSI SEA Region is now a very viable organization that can definitely play an important role in terms of advancing science and translating science to programs that change lives.

# MR GEOFFRY SMITH – A GLIMPSE OF OUR NEW PRESIDENT

**M**r Geoffry Smith has assumed the role of President of ILSI SEA Region as of April 2008. A member and partner of ILSI SEA Region for the past 8 years, he also served the organization as Honorary Treasurer for the past 2 years and as a Board member for the past 6 years.



Mr Smith is the Global Director of Health Chelates of Akzo Nobel, the division responsible for developing ferrazone, a.k.a. Ferric Sodium EDTA. This is a global project within Akzo Nobel dedicated to addressing problems of iron-deficiency anemia worldwide. Mr Smith directs the international business for functional chemicals in food and nutrition as well as the pharmaceutical applications of these chemicals. On top of this gargantuan task, Mr. Smith still directs the Asia-Pacific activities for Akzo Nobel's innovation unit. A true asset to the company, he is backed by 25 years of experience in the chemical industry in Asia-Pacific after working in Akzo Nobel's Netherlands office. He has been in Singapore for the past 14 years. He is also a member of the Nutrition Society of the United Kingdom and American Chemical Society.

As Mr Smith embarks on a new phase in his professional life as ILSI SEA Region President, we conducted an interview to have a glimpse of what is in store for ILSI SEA Region in the coming years.

**Question (Q):** *As ILSI SEA Region's new President, what is your vision for the organization?*

**Mr Geoffry Smith (GS):** Let me start by saying that ILSI SEA Region has made significant inroads in promoting science –based decision-making whether it is in aid of public health policies or programs, for consumers making informed decisions, or for industry responding to consumer needs or demands. I believe ILSI SEA Region should continue to play this important role by providing a neutral platform where healthy and productive dialogues on important and relevant issues affecting the region can take place.

**Q:** *In what other areas do you think ILSI SEA Region should focus on?*

**GS:** Most countries in the Asian region still have to grapple with challenges like how to feed its burgeoning population and fighting diseases that claim the lives of millions of people. As an organization, ILSI SEA Region is determined to contribute to the generation of evidence-based information of what works and what does not.

One good example is our work on PROJECT IDEA (Iron-Deficiency Elimination Action) which is implemented in partnership with ILSI Center for Health Promotion (JAPAN CHP) Japan to tackle iron-deficiency anemia (IDA) which affect millions of children and pregnant women in Asia. Both in children and pregnant women, IDA can cause irreversible damages that can have massive functional, social and economic consequences.

There is a need to further strengthen risk assessment skills and processes in the region. As we continue to encounter food safety issues and with the emergence of novel products there is an increasing demand for this type of capability. We should also continue what we have started in terms of harmonization in areas like food safety and functional food labeling and nutrition and dietary guidelines.

**Q:** *What other plans do you wish to share to ILSI SEA Region members?*

**GS:** We value partnerships and this has been one of the major strengths of ILSI SEA Region. Recognizing the value of collaboration, I will try to promote and work for the strengthening of collaborations within ILSI Branches as well as encourage the establishment of new partnerships.

**ILSI SOUTHEAST ASIA REGION  
2008 – 2009**

*Building strategic and sustainable partnerships has been one of ILSI's guiding principles. ILSI SEA Region, in particular, has benefited from these partnerships as we witnessed through the years enhanced research capabilities, cumulative scientific benefits and increasing local relevance of our undertakings.*

**BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIP WITH FNRI OF THE PHILIPPINES**

This section is a celebration of these valuable partnerships as we feature our partners, individuals and organizations from the industry, scientific/research/professional organizations etc.

In 1987, the reorganization of the National Science and Technology Authority (NSTA) into DOST redefined the functions of FNRI. To date, FNRI provides frontline technical services to various clients that range from product/technology development to commercialization and food and nutrition databases among others.

After 61 years of existence, the relevant technologies and scientific information on food and nutrition that FNRI has generated have been shared and disseminated to a wider audience including health and nutrition policy makers and program implementers as well as communities and households for ensuring food and nutrition security among Filipinos as an expression of its commitment to the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) and National Science and Technology Plan (NSTP).

Productive and mutually enriching characterize ILSI SEA Region's long time partnership with FNRI that dates back more than a decade ago. Two

past directors of FNRI namely, Dr. Rodolfo F. Florentino and Dr. Corazon VC. Barba, have worked closely with ILSI SEA Region by serving as Scientific Directors on the Board, and providing their guidance to the branch's scientific programs. Dr Florentino is also the Country Co-ordinator of ILSI SEA Region's Philippine Country Committee.

A number of high-impact collaborations between ILSI SEA Region and FNRI include Harmonization of Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) in Southeast Asia, three-country study on adolescent food consumption and physical activity patterns, Carbohydrate Symposium and now also with ILSI Japan Center for Health Promotion (CHP), Rice Fortification with iron as part of Project IDEA in Asia.

Currently, FNRI is headed by Dr. Mario V. Capanzana who is head of the local organizing committee for ILSI SEA Region's forthcoming 5th Asian Conference on Food and Nutrition Safety and pre-conference Satellite Symposium on Biotechnology and Nutritionally Enhanced Food and Crops to be held from November 3-7, 2008 in Cebu City, Philippines.

For more information on FNRI, visit their website: [www.fnri.dost.gov.ph](http://www.fnri.dost.gov.ph)

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Visit us at [www.ilsi.org](http://www.ilsi.org) to find out more about our upcoming activities and programs.



**ILSI SOUTHEAST ASIA REGIONAL NEWS**

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