



Summer Meeting, 14–17 July 2014, Carbohydrates in health: friends or foes

Whole grain consumption – A French perspective

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Epidemiological evidence consistently demonstrates a positive association between whole grain consumption and health benefits including a reduced risk of obesity, diabetes and CVD⁽¹⁾. In the present study, whole grain consumption was estimated in a representative sample of the French population (children, adolescents and adults) using the Comportement et Consommations Alimentaires en France (CCAF) 2010 dietary survey⁽²⁾. Dietary intake was assessed using a 7 day food diary. A comprehensive approach was taken to estimate whole grain intake from all dietary sources with no lower limit applied to the amount of whole grain in a food. Over half of all whole grain foods identified were assigned a whole grain content value at brand level using quantitative ingredient declarations on labels. The majority of the French population did not report any consumption of whole grain over the 7-day survey period. Among consumers (33–47% of the total population), mean daily intakes were very low, reaching only 7.3 g, 12.9 g, 14.4 g in children, adolescents and adults respectively. Whole grain foods were consumed on average only 3–4 eating times per week. The main dietary sources were breakfast cereals (children and adolescents) and bread (adults) and the majority of whole grain was consumed at the breakfast occasion. Although there are no specific whole grain recommendations in France, compliance with national recommendations⁽³⁾ on starchy foods which encourages consumption of whole cereals was extremely low. Strategies to increase the consumption of whole grain in the French population including clearer quantitative whole grain dietary recommendations along with consumer education on the health benefits of whole grain and clearer labelling of whole grain products are warranted. Future studies should focus on understanding the reasons for such low levels of whole grain consumption in France.

1. Ye EA, Chacko SA, Chou EL *et al.* (2012) *J Nur* **142**, 1304–1313.

2. Hébel P (2012) *Comportements et Consommations Alimentaires en France*. Paris: Tec & Doc Lavoisier.

3. Programme National Nutrition Santé (PNNS 2011–2015) available at <http://www.mangerbouger.fr/pnns/pnns-2011-2015.html>.