Changing with the Times

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Late in 2008, we introduced our new Seven Key Scientific Initiatives. These topics have undergone some minor revisions since the annual meeting, and the Board of Directors has recommended that the topics be reviewed annually along with the strategic plan to ensure their relevancy for our membership. The scope of research performed by our members has changed drastically since our association was founded in 1915, and I expect that it will continue to do so. The Quality of Science Task Force and the Board of Directors envisioned the Seven Key Scientific Initiatives to be a guide for AACC International’s scientific activities, from the annual meeting program to Cereal Chemistry and our other publications, including those on the Internet. The first initiative, Health and Nutrition, was literally the first idea that came to the task force members’ minds. A quick glance through any issue of Cereal Foods World will confirm that this topic is of high interest to our members, whether professionally or personally. Nutrition research within the American Association of Cereal Chemists, now AACC International, began with simple feeding studies to establish the nutritional properties of grains and to test for the presence of antinutrients. Researchers today are examining the role of grain nonnutrient compounds, such as flavonoids and arabinoxylans, in human health, and alkylresorcinols, once considered undesirable compounds in grains, are being studied as biomarkers for whole grain consumption. AACC International members are involved in a variety of human clinical trials to assess the role of grains, their products, and ingredients derived from grains on a variety of health effects, including satiety, obesity, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. In the Health and Nutrition Initiative, the role of pulses (legumes) in health is also important. This topic also encompasses other types of research that you may not have thought about being part of AACC International. For example, if you have not already done so, please take a look at our preliminary program for the 2009 AACC International Annual Meeting in Baltimore at http://meeting.aaccnet.org/program/Symposia.cfm. Symposia topics under the Health and Nutrition Initiative include “The Effects of Dietary Fiber from Cereals on Gut Health”; “the HEALTHGRAIN Project Symposium,” showcasing the European project on grains and health; and “What Scientific Evidence Is Needed to Substantiate Health Effects of Dietary Fiber from Cereals?” Other symposia will tie in to this initiative, including “Cereal Grain Components: Analysis and Bioavailability”; “Replacing Gluten Functionality”; “Tools to Evaluate Health Benefits of Cereals”; “The Role of Grain-Based Foods in the Prevention of Childhood Obesity”; “Opportunities to Enhance Cereal Products: Pulse Components as Nutritional and Functional Ingredients”; and “Advances in Delivery of Food Nutrients—Tailoring Process Operations for Health and Wellness.” Even if your own work does not involve health or nutrition, you cannot afford to miss these sessions to help you make informed food decisions for your personal well being, and also to stay on top of the latest research. In these challenging times, we cannot be sure what our next positions will entail—the AACC International meeting offers a breadth of topics to help you stay informed.

Skipping ahead to our last, but not least, scientific initiative, I would like to point out a few tweaks we made this year. Rheology was added to the Quality and Analytical Methods Initiative so that the final initiative could focus on processing and engineering. We also broadened the description to emphasize that we are not just concerned with foods made from grains, because our members study how grains and pulses can be converted to biofuels and other industrial ingredients. Nonfood uses for these crops are not limited to the last initiative, however. At the 2009 Annual Meeting, the Biotechnology and Sustainability symposium is entitled “Biofuel from Maize: Current Economics and Future Sustainability.” Whether you agree with the use of corn (maize) for fuel, this session can enlighten you about the status of this biofuel stock.

We realize that not all of our members can attend the annual meeting. Beginning in 2008 at our engaging Honolulu meeting, we began to record top presentations so that all members could have access to them. In January, the Cereal Science Knowledge Database was released. New presentations will be continuously added and older ones updated as needed. Many presentations at C&E’s Whole Grain Global Summit will also be available through the database. While there are many webinar-type products available, we feel that this technology is the best way to bring news to our members, while asserting our position to present the best science and technology pertaining to grains. If you have suggestions for topics you think would benefit our members, please let me or our staff know.

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