

## ADSA Production Division Symposium: Dairy Products and Human Health: The Facts

**766 Dairy products and human health: The facts.** D. I. Givens\*, *University of Reading, Reading, Berkshire, United Kingdom.*

Increasing obesity and an aging population increase substantially the risk of chronic disease and its associated cost. Diet is a modifier of risk and since milk and its products are staple components of most Western diets providing key nutrients, it is very important to understand whether these foods also increase or decrease the risk of chronic disease. This paper will assess the current evidence available. A recent meta-analysis (Elwood et al., 2008) showed the relative risk of stroke and/or heart disease in subjects with high milk or dairy consumption was 0.84 (95% CI 0.76, 0.93) and 0.79 (0.75, 0.82) respectively, relative to the risk in those with low consumption. Four studies reported incident diabetes as an outcome, and the relative risk in the subjects with the highest intake of milk or dairy foods was 0.92 (0.86, 0.97). The World Cancer Research Fund (2007) report confirmed that increased milk consumption will probably decrease the risk of colorectal cancer. Some studies have

shown a positive association between increased milk consumption and prostate cancer but the increased risk is small and not consistent across studies. It should however not be ignored. Set against the proportion of total deaths attributable to the life-threatening diseases in the EU i.e. vascular disease, diabetes and cancer, the available data provide evidence of an overall survival advantage from the consumption of milk although the situation with other dairy foods is much less clear and needs urgent clarification. For milk in particular there appears to be an enormous mismatch between both the advice given on milk/dairy foods items by various authorities and public perceptions of harm from the consumption of milk and dairy products, and the evidence from long-term prospective cohort studies. These foods do however supply a sizeable proportion of dietary saturated fatty acids in many countries but simply reducing milk consumption to reduce saturated fatty acid intake is not likely to produce benefits overall though the production of dairy products with reduced saturated fatty acid contents is likely to be helpful.

**Key Words:** milk, health, epidemiology