

Editorial

The 1st International Conference on Sustainable Health and Nutrition During the Life Cycle 19-21 March 2024: An Introduction

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The 1st Conference on Sustainable Health and Nutrition during the Life Cycle, held at Rio de Janeiro State University from March 19 to 21 2024, was a success, with over 350 registered participants. This conference, which was free to attend, aimed to democratize knowledge regarding sustainable health and nutrition and provide a networking platform to share ideas on the theme.

We received numerous abstracts from students, healthcare professionals, nutritionists, educators and researchers from different organisations. To ensure a thorough review process, a dedicated committee convened to assess and curate selections for both oral and poster presentations.

Aligning with the conference's theme, we endeavoured to host an eco-friendly event by embracing a paperless approach, opting for succinct 3-minute digital poster presentations, which proved successful. However, as we progressed, it became apparent that additional technological infrastructure was necessary to fully realise a paperless conference experience. Recognising the constraints posed by limited resources, particularly within public universities in Brazil, we adapted our approach to prioritise sustainability by hosting a conference using less paper and more talking.

The conference opened with one keynote session on "Nutrition Strategies for a Healthier Future: Insights from Dietary Trends and Childhood Obesity Prevention", presented by Professor Rosely Sichieri and Professor Berit L. Heitmann. Professor Sichieri highlighted the growing prevalence of obesity among children in Brazil and the increase in low birth weight observed from 2000 to 2019. Her presentation emphasised the need for effective strategies to combat the rising trend of childhood obesity. Professor Heitmann highlighted the lack of primary prevention initiatives targeting children with a healthy weight and the lack of effectiveness of lifestyle interventions for this group. She emphasised the need for interventions solely focused on

healthy-weight children and targeting factors beyond just diet and physical activity.

On the second day, the conference was marked by insightful keynote sessions and short talks that shed light on the intricate links between agroecology and nutrition. The discussions revolved around the challenges and opportunities for sustainable health and nutrition in the context of our rapidly changing world. The keynote session titled "From Farm to Fork: Nourishing Communities for Sustainable Health and Nutrition" emphasised the importance of understanding how we are nourishing the planet and ourselves. It highlighted the the association between income disparity and food availability in different territories with deprived areas presenting a high risk of having food deserts and swamps.

The third day of the conference was dedicated to the discussion and presentation of community action initiatives that promoted cultural heritage related to food and nutrition. The keynote session on "Rooted in Tradition: Exploring Afro-Ancestral Perspectives on Healthy Eating and Sustainable Food Practices" explored healthy eating practices from an Afro-ancestral perspective and the promotion of edible gardens in public schools as a sustainable strategy for food and nutrition education. This session also underscored the unsustainability of the current food system, characterised by low biodiversity, low access and poor food quality and by high consumption of ultra-processed foods. The session also described the preliminary findings of the Green Child school-based intervention to promote the intake of unprocessed or minimally processed food and to reduce the consumption of ultra-processed foods.

On the third day, the conference also saw the launch of a book on "Non-conventional Edible Plants Garden, Culture and Food: Food and Nutritional Sovereignty and Security". This book delves into the critical topic of food sustainability, advocating for strategies to enhance food and nutritional

sovereignty and security. Its contents cover a range of pressing issues, including the repercussions of unsustainable food systems on the environment, the rich diversity of edible plants, the food heritage of indigenous communities, and the significance of cultivating urban gardens.

We closed the conference with a session on “Community Actions and a Glance at Urban Food Systems: from farm to fork.” This session underscored the importance of community engagement in sustainable food practices. It critiqued recent setbacks in food security policies and called for progressive public health actions. The session also discussed some pedagogical strategies used in the pandemic scenario. The team demonstrated creativity and technical mastery in providing health and nutrition care through digital food and nutrition education activities. This innovative experience not only fostered professional development but also promoted a sense of welcome, belonging, and digital inclusion for older people.

During the conference, participants had access to a coffee break prepared with products from family farming with an agroecological basis from the state of Rio de Janeiro. The coffee break was used as an opportunity to show the audience how unconventional foods can be used in flavorful preparations. During the coffee breaks, we conducted a nutritional and gastronomic education activity led by undergraduate students from Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ). More details about this activity are available in reflections by dos Santos et al. entitled “Nurturing Plates and Minds – A Gastronomic Education Initiative at the 1st International Conference on Sustainable Health and Nutrition”.

As the inaugural 1st International Conference on

Sustainable Health and Nutrition During the Life Cycle drew to a close, it became clear that its success set a promising precedent for future interactions. With this important event starting a journey to encourage worldwide conversation and teamwork in sustainable health and nutrition, people are naturally looking forward to the possibility of another conference. Given the positive reception and enthusiastic participation witnessed throughout the conference, there emerges a strong likelihood that the Rio de Janeiro State University will once again host a gathering of minds dedicated to advancing the cause of sustainability in health and nutrition. With such momentum and enthusiasm driving us forward, the idea of organising a second International Conference on Sustainable Health and Nutrition is not just a possibility, but a likelihood.

In conclusion, the 1st Conference on Sustainable Health and Nutrition during the Life Cycle was a significant step towards fostering a dialogue on sustainable health and nutrition. It served as a platform for sharing ideas and experiences, and for promoting a sense of community and inclusivity. The conference has set a high standard for future events, and we look forward to seeing how these discussions will shape the future of sustainable health and nutrition.

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