P71  Fatty acid composition of dairy products derived from certified organic and conventional agricultural methods
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Background – The potential for agricultural practices to influence the nutritional quality of food has long been debated particularly when comparing foods produced by organic and conventional agricultural methods. Whilst it has been established that different feeds affect the quality of cows’ milk, there are relatively few studies that compare the effect of organic agricultural practices on the fatty acid composition of dairy products.

Objectives – To determine the fatty acid composition of dairy products that are available on the Australian market that have been produced through certified organic or conventional agricultural methods.

Design – Sixty two samples of certified organic dairy products [milk, n=11; cheese, n=14; cream, n=6; and yoghurt, n=31]; and 45 conventional samples [milk, n=7; cheese, n=13; cream, n=5; and yoghurt, n=20] were purchased from a range of commercial outlets in Sydney. The samples were homogenised, the lipids were extracted and the fatty acid composition was determined by using gas chromatography.

Outcomes – Small but statistically significant differences were observed in the saturated fatty acid composition, with lower percentages of lauric (2.2 vs 2.4, P<0.05) and myristic (10.1 vs 10.5, P<0.05) acids detected in organic dairy products as compared to their conventional counterpart, respectively. No differences were noted in either the ω-3 or ω-6 fatty acids between the organic and conventional samples. However, organic cheese was found to have a lower total polyunsaturated fatty acids content (P<0.05), and milk was found to have a higher ω-3:ω-6 ratio (P<0.05) compared to the matched conventional products.

Conclusion – Dairy products that are produced by organic or conventional methods have small but significant differences in their fatty acid composition. Whilst the decrease in lauric and myristic acids and increase in ω-3:ω-6 ratio indicate a potentially favourable fatty acids profile in organic products, the magnitude of the differences is small and the observation cannot be applied uniformly to all dairy product categories.

P72  The Victorian food security network
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Background – The VicHealth initiative Food for All: Improving access to food for healthy eating. A food security program will progress Victorian improvement in food security through a number of creative projects over several years. One of these projects is the e-based Food Security Network (1) auspiced by the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA).

Objectives – The network aims to provide support for local governments and other stakeholders, who are working with their communities to reduce barriers to local food access for healthy eating, and to improve food security.

Design – The VLGA website provides up to date news and events in the local government sector. Open access to the network provides entry to links for other organizations and resources related to food security. The discussion forum creates a space for ongoing interactive debate, discussion, support and resources around the issues of food security, particularly those in local government areas. This information can be accessed by anyone. The actual discussants have been initially restricted to organisations or individuals in Victoria who are registered discussion group members.

Outcomes – After one year of operation, questionnaire evaluation of the evolving website indicates that it is beginning to fulfil the purpose intended, with 70 registered members from local governments and a range of other settings. Local food policies and municipal public health plans linked to municipal strategy statements and corporate plans include opportunities for improving food security through the natural, built, economic, social-cultural, and health environments for residents in all neighbourhoods. Other important stakeholders include residents, self-help groups and clubs, primary health care partnerships, primary health care agencies, community services, welfare organisations, and health institutions such as local hospitals.

Conclusion – The Food Security Network provides information and support for local governments who have a whole of population responsibility and for other stakeholders who can contribute to improved community health and well-being through equitable and local food chain systems.

Reference