



OVERVIEW: NORAMFOODS, THE INFOODS REGIONAL DATA CENTER FOR NORTH AMERICA

Barbara Burlingame, INFOODS Coordinator, c/o NZ Institute for Crop & Food Research, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

When INFOODS was created in 1983, one of its goals was to establish regional data centers around the world, to improve the quality and quantity of food composition data, especially in developing countries; and to enhance and encourage development of standards, harmonisation efforts, and interchange of food composition data. Most countries in the world are now part of a regional data centre. The country by country association with regional data centres is determined by those countries, and can be based on common culture, language, geographic proximity or trading bloc agreements.

The UNU/FAO/INFOODS regional data centre for North America -- NORAMFOODS -- is now firmly in place. A structure for NORAMFOODS, proposed at the first meeting held in February 1995, was formalised at the second meeting held in September 1996. A third meeting was held in July 1997 to review activities, progress and problems. NORAMFOODS is made up of representatives of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. In addition, the Mexican National Food Composition Data Center (MEXFOODS) coordinates a network for the Spanish and French speaking countries of the Caribbean, known as MEXCARIBEFODS. The English-speaking countries of the Caribbean are covered by a regional data center in Jamaica, known as CARICOMFOODS. Representatives of MEXCARIBEFODS and CARICOMFOODS will continue to be represented at all NORAMFOODS meetings. Among the decisions taken was that six working groups would be necessary in order to achieve harmonisation in food composition data sets prepared in the different countries. These proposed working groups include: recipe standardization; food terminology and nomenclature; analytical methods and quality control; data quality identification; statistical issues; and industrial ingredients data base. The first of these will be coordinated by Miriam Chavez of MEXFOODS, the second by Danielle Brulé of CANADAFOODS and the remaining four by USDA personnel. MEXFOODS and NORAMFOODS are already using INFOODS tagnames which facilitate data interchange within the INFOODS system. Both CARICOMFOODS and CANADAFOODS will incorporate tagnames in their data bases as soon as possible. Joanne Holden was elected coordinator of NORAMFOODS for a two-year term.

The panel discussion at the end of this session will help the NORAMFOODS coordinator, each country's coordinator, and each of you who is active in food composition work, to see how your work plans, on-going research and food composition projects can serve the goal of achieving more and better food composition data for use for everyone throughout the countries of North America, and beyond.