

is a really good idea, especially now when nutrition problems are so universal and so complex. Barriers between 'hard' nutrition science and 'soft' social, behavioural, environmental and policy sciences no longer serve either side. This Project should be required reading for everyone who investigates or applies nutrition science. I, for one, will use this volume in my classes. Cheers to *PHN* and to the IUNS for taking this on.

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Indigenous harmony

Sir,

I am now promoting *The New Nutrition Science project* and its findings and recommendations with members of our island food community here in Pohnpei in Micronesia, working in collaboration with and under the guidance of Professor Harriet Kuhnlein. We are documenting and promoting indigenous food systems in a global health project, whose aims and objectives are in harmony with those of *The New Nutrition Science project*.

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The New Nutrition Science project holds much promise to develop our thinking in the nutritional sciences about the issues of people living at the 'grass roots' in the real world of global environmental and economic, and hence nutritional, change.

The IUNS task force I chair works with 12 indigenous peoples' rural communities located in all global regions¹. The research is to understand how cultural, ecological and environmental knowledge of indigenous peoples have developed sustainable food systems, and how this knowledge can be supported and enhanced to ensure nutritional status, without excessive dependence on industrial foods or pharmaceuticals.

Harriet Kuhnlein

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Reference

- 1 Kuhnlein H. IUNS task force: Indigenous peoples' food systems and nutrition. Report, May 2005. Available at <http://www.iuns.org>

Reducing and integrating

Sir,

The New Nutrition Science project is a welcome initiative, given what still remains the dominant paradigm of biochemical- or chemical-nutrient-level reductionism. The reductive focus on nutrients and biomarkers (whether these be protein, the glycemic index or body mass index) removed from all other contexts and frameworks of understanding food and the body – which I call *nutritionism*¹ – still dominates most nutrition research, dietary advice and policy formulation, and much lay thinking.

Nutritionism provides scientific legitimacy for, and drives the development and marketing of, nutritionally-modified processed foods, functionally-marketed foods, fad weight-loss diets, and nutritionally-modified GM crops². It is now also being overlain by genetic-level reductionism in the form of nutrigenomics, or 'genetic nutritionism', likely to pave the way to development of nutrigenomically-marketed processed foods. Thus, nutrition science is now used to facilitate the adaptation and integration of populations and individuals into an unhealthy, inequitable, unsustainable corporate-industrial agri-food system.

Neither the quantification of the chemical-nutrient composition of foods, nor the official 'Food Pyramids' originated in the USA³ which largely consist of wholefood categories, have equipped citizens with adequate terminology or conceptual frameworks for interpreting and resisting the flood of ever more processed, reconstituted and 'fortified' foods. There is a pressing need for clear distinctions of foods in terms of their levels and types of processing. The late Ross Hume Hall, for example, recently proposed a ranking of four nutritional quality levels largely based on the degree of processing⁴.

The New Nutrition Science project rightly emphasises the need to integrate cultural and ecological dimensions with