

31 October 2008

Balanced diet: Everything in moderation, except for vegetables

“Take your vitamins.” Who does not remember this daily parental admonishment? Vitamins and other micronutrients are a crucial component of human health, but the way in which they are consumed matters.

Worldwide, 250 million children are deficient in vitamin A. According to the U.S. National Health Institute, approximately 250,000-500,000 children in developing countries become blind each year due to a lack of vitamin A, with the highest prevalence in Southeast Asia and Africa.

Vitamin A supplements provided by the pharmaceutical industry have been the first choice for decades to address serious micronutrient deficiencies. For 30 years children were given supplements twice a year, and common foods such as sugar were fortified with synthetic vitamin A. Supplements can prevent the long-term effects of vitamin A deficiency such as blindness, but because intake can be irregular, supplements are not the best approach to vitamin malnutrition. The body needs a more stable level of vitamin A to fight infection.

A far more promising method is a balanced diet with a high vegetable



intake. “The food-based approach, such as increasing vegetable consumption, is the most sustainable strategy to fight vitamin A deficiencies globally, and it is by far a tastier approach,” says Dr. Sherry Tanumihardjo, Associate Professor in the Department of Nutritional Sciences and International Nutrition Program of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a member of the *Journal of Nutrition’s* editorial board. The renowned expert on the relationship of carotenoid bioavailability and human health visited the Center on 24 October 2008 in response to an invitation by AVRDC – The World Vegetable Center’s Board of Directors to identify common threads between the Center and the UW for future linkages.

“Vegetables provide carotenoids, which can be converted by our body to vitamin A,” said Dr. Tanumihardjo. “The conversion efficiency depends on the vitamin A status. It means that when we need vitamin A, more carotenoids will be converted to vitamin A, and when we have enough vitamin A, our body slows down the conversion and stores carotenoids in our body tissue as antioxidants.”

Her observations should prompt parents to modify that initial statement: *Eat your vegetables, get your vitamins.*

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The LIBRARY



Web Link of the Week: PestNet

PestNet is an email network that helps people in the Pacific and Southeast Asia obtain rapid advice and information on plant protection, including the identification and management of plant pests. It links the Pacific and Southeast Asian regions with plant

protection specialists worldwide. PestNet has members from government and nongovernmental organizations, universities, and the private sector. Any organization, group, or individual can join. All that is required is access to email, a question to ask, information to

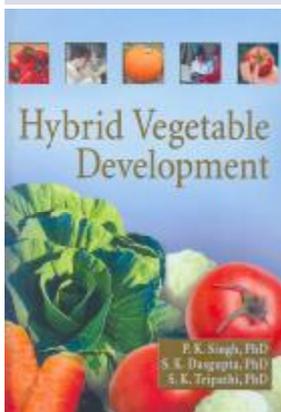
give, or just an interest in plant protection and being part of a worldwide network.

Please visit

[www.pestnet.org/PestNet/
tabid/1099/Default.aspx](http://www.pestnet.org/PestNet/tabid/1099/Default.aspx)

New publications

... new books available

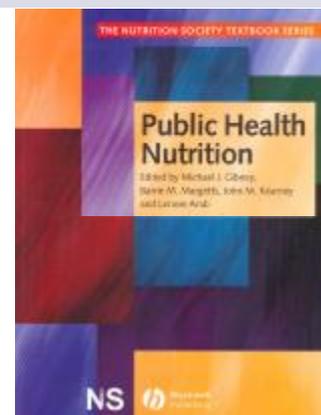


Singh, P.K., Dasgupta, S.K., Tripathi, S.K. (2004). *Hybrid Vegetable Development*. Binghamton, NY: Food Products Press. xv, 441 pp.

Here are some useful chapters from this book:

- ∇ A review of hybrid cauliflower development, by S.R. Sharma. p.151-193.
- ∇ An outlook in hybrid eggplant breeding, by A.S. Sidhu. p.15-29.

- ∇ An overview of hybrid kholrabi breeding, by T.S. Verma. p.135-150.
- ∇ Bottlegourd breeding, by S.P. Singh. p.363-375.
- ∇ Breeding for hybrid hot pepper, by J.S. Hundal. p.31-50.
- ∇ Current researches in hybrid broccoli, by P. Kalia. p.109-134.
- ∇ Current trends in onion breeding, by A.S. Sidhu. p.223-245.
- ∇ Current trends in cabbage breeding, by Z.Y. Fang. p.75-107.
- ∇ Heterosis in bittergourd, by T.K. Behera. p.217-221.
- ∇ Hybrid cucumber, by U.K. Kohli. p.377-382.
- ∇ Hybrid loofah, by P.K. Singh. p.211-215.
- ∇ Hybrid tomato breeding, by D.S. Cheema. p.1-14.
- ∇ Objectives of okra breeding, by B.S. Dhankhar. p.195-209.
- ∇ Perspectives of bell pepper breeding, by S. Joshi. p.51-74.



Gibney, M.J., Margetts, B.M., Kearney, J.M., Arab, L. (2004). *Public Health Nutrition*. Oxford, OX: Blackwell Science Ltd. x, 378 pp.

— Fang-chin Chen, Editorial and Library

FOCUS: AFRICA

Visit to AVRDC-RCA of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Citizen Network for Foreign Affairs (CNFA) Delegates



Mr. Steiner (red shirt) chats with RCA staff

Mr. Roy Steiner and Mr. Khalid Bomba from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and a delegation of CNFA-Tanzania led by the Country Director, Mr. Fernandos Vallerian, visited AVRDC-RCA on Wednesday 29 October 2008. The delegates visited ongoing evaluation trials of jute mallow, Ethiopian mustard, African Eggplant and amaranth, and were impressed by the diversity of African indigenous vegetables. The visitors had in-depth discussions with RCA staff on breeding

approaches to develop varieties that incorporate farmers' and consumers' desired traits, RCA's strategy to strengthen the seed system, and public-private partnerships. The visit was complemented by a tour through the participatory selection of African nightshade accessions by a group of farmers from various

districts of Arusha, Tanzania. Mr. Steiner and Mr. Bomba commend RCA's efforts to involve farmers at the grassroots level of the breeding process.

— Dr. Rémi Nono-Womdim,
Program Research Manager and Liaison
Officer, Vegetable Breeding and Seed
Systems Program (vBSS)



Farmers' participatory variety selection of African nightshade

SKETCH



After 36 years of supervising the Center's finances, AVRDC Comptroller Nancy Chai is closing the ledger on an accounting career that began with handling a few thousand dollars and ended with managing millions. Nancy joined the Center in 1972 fresh out of university and was excited to

become part of a new vegetable research organization dedicated to helping farmers improve the quality and quantity of the world's vegetable food supply. Thanks to Nancy's personal integrity, professional rectitude, and careful husbanding of funds, that fledgling organization was able to grow into a globally recognized resource for quality seed and outstanding scientific research. Nancy worked with all eight of the Center's Directors General, beginning with Dr. Robert F. Chandler, who also founded the International Rice Research Institute. Her strong work ethic spanning three decades set an example of excellence for her staff and colleagues. Nancy's diligence

and attention to detail, and her ability to quickly analyze accounting errors and fix problems, kept the Center on track to meet its financial obligations and reporting commitments to donors. "On behalf of all AVRDC staff, I would like to extend to Nancy our deepest gratitude for her outstanding service to the Center," said Dr. Dyno Keatinge, the eighth Director General she has served under. "And I want to personally thank Nancy for staying on to guide and assist me during my first year as DG." Nancy's plans for retirement include helping a friend run a small company, reading some good books, and learning how to paint. Nancy, we will miss you!

CORNUCOPIA

2009 National and special holidays to be observed at HQ

For 2009, the ROC Central Personnel Administration (CPA) has adjusted two work days (30 January and 29 May) falling on Fridays as holidays to facilitate people enjoying long holidays for Chinese Lunar New Year and the Dragon Boat Festival. To make up for these two work days, public agencies and schools need to work on two Saturdays, 17 January and 6 June.

However, in order not to adversely affect the research

activities at HQ and our communications with regional centers/offices and external collaborators outside Taiwan, we will not follow the above regulations made by the CPA. If you wish to take a long holiday for Chinese Lunar New Year or Dragon Boat Festival, you may make use of your annual leave or Personal Holiday.

No deferred day off will be granted for those memorial and festival holidays which fall on

Saturdays except for Chinese Lunar New Year's Eve, as announced by the CPA.

For internal control and record purposes, you are required to submit a Leave Request to our Human Resources before you use your Personal Holiday and the Leave Request needs to be approved and signed by the unit head.

January 1	Thursday	Founding Day of the Republic of China
January 25	Sunday	Chinese Lunar New Year's Eve
January 26-28	Monday to Wednesday	Chinese Lunar New Year
January 29	Thursday	Deferred day off for Chinese Lunar New Year's Eve
February 28	Saturday	Peace Memorial Day
April 4	Saturday	Tomb-sweeping Day
May 28	Thursday	Dragon Boat Festival
October 3	Saturday	Mid-Autumn Festival
October 10	Saturday	National Day
One day of your choice	Any work day	Personal Holiday granted by AVRDC – may be used for Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, Holi, Vesak, family matters, etc.

— Dr. Yin-Fu Chang, Deputy Director General for Administration and Services

Monster pumpkin claims big prize

Did you know that a pumpkin can be grown as big as an adult buffalo of 1,075-pound body weight (or about 490 kg)? If you are interested in growing such a giant pumpkin under tropical conditions, Dr. Zhanyong Sun, the Center's cucurbit breeder, may have appropriate advise for you. We certainly would like to learn not only about the size but also about the nutritional content, taste and resistance to pests and diseases of

this admittedly eye-catching pumpkin.

Karl Haist Kneels, who grew the award-winning 1075-pound pumpkin, at the World Pumpkin Confederation in Clarence, a suburb of Buffalo, New York, on Saturday, 4 October 2008.

(Adapted from The China Post, 6 October 2008)



— News forwarded by Dr. Madhu Bhattarai