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Coronavirus is not transmitted through food consumption

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Executive Summary

EFSA released a statement on the coronavirus and its transmission, as other scientists and authorities have expressed their position on the matter. They all agree that COVID-19 is not transmitted through the consumption of food, and reminded the population of the common hygiene rules to take into consideration at all times.

Meat can be of assistance when preventing health infections, because of its Vitamin D and easily absorb metabolite 25- hydroxycholecalciferol content. By inhibiting metabolic stress and stimulating the immune response.

Résumé analytique

L'EFSA a publié une déclaration sur le coronavirus et sa transmission, alors que d'autres scientifiques et autorités ont exprimé leur position sur la question. Ils sont tous d'accord sur le fait que COVID-19 ne se transmet pas par la consommation d'aliments, et ont rappelé à la population les règles d'hygiène communes à prendre en considération à tout moment.

La viande peut être utile pour prévenir les infections sanitaires, en raison de sa vitamine D et de sa teneur en métabolite 25-hydroxycholecalciférol qui s'absorbe facilement. En inhibant le stress métabolique et en stimulant la réponse immunitaire.

Introduction

COVID-19 commonly known as “coronavirus” is at the centre of all attention today, including in social media. A part from reliable information circulating from health specialists, a great amount of misinformation has flared up. Since the start of the outbreak, one of the misconceptions circulating is about getting infected by eating animal food products, Chinese food or raw meat. The WHO, FAO, European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and Federal Public Services (FPS) of Belgium have stated their views.

EFSA’s statement on Coronavirus

On 3rd February 2020, EFSA communicated that they were not currently involved in the response to the COVID-19 outbreak because ***“food had not been identified as a likely source or route of transmission of the virus”***.¹

In addition, on Monday 9th March 2020, EFSA published a communication statement informing **there is no evidence that suggests that coronavirus is transmitted through food consumption**.² They are aware, like the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) that wild animals were likely the source of the initial infection. In China, a strict ban on the consumption and farming of “wild animals” is being rolled out. China has acknowledged it needs to bring its lucrative wildlife industry under control if it is to prevent another outbreak. In late February 2020, it slapped a temporary ban on all farming and consumption of “terrestrial wildlife of important ecological, scientific and social value,” which is expected to be signed into law later this year.

Scientist and authorities on food consumption

Scientists and authorities, who are monitoring the spread of the virus around the world, have not reported any transmission through food.² For example, BfR, Germany’s risk assessment body, mentioned that there is **no evidence of humans being infected with COVID-19 through the consumption of contaminated food or imported products**.³ The Belgium FPS also agrees with the statements and highlights that food has not been identified as a probable source or route of transmission of the virus; however, the FASf reminds that good hygiene practices are essential when handling food and prevent most contaminations. General hygiene rules (e.g. hand washing) and hygiene rules for food (e.g. avoid cross contamination) should always be taken into consideration, regardless the possible contamination with the coronavirus which has been seen as *“not highly resistant viruses in the environment and are rapidly inactivated when they end up on surface”*.⁴ Inactivation in dry conditions generally occurs within a period from a few hours to a few days. As the viruses are sensitive to heat, the risk of infection can also be reduced by heating foods.⁴ The WHO also mentioned some common food hygiene practices to follow and ensure food safety at all times.⁵

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) are working together to assist member countries and research communities to tackle the disease. The FAO specially expressed that anything related to COVID-19 outbreak and the human health, the **WHO is the authority and primary source of information.**⁶

Meat and its link to the Immune System

Meat can even be of assistance when preventing health infections, because of their rich nutritional content. Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin found in meat products as vitamin D3^{1, 12}; its metabolite **25- hydroxycholecalciferol (25(OH)-D-3) can be found especially in the meat and liver of livestock**. This metabolite **is considered to have a high biological activity**, with a better and faster absorption from the diet than vitamin D3 itself.⁴

Research papers have revealed that vitamin D have an anti-inflammatory and immune-regulatory action. It is accomplished by its ability to inhibit metabolic stress and stimulate the immune response.⁶⁻⁸ Evidence shows that calcitriol, another vitamin D metabolite, enhances the antimicrobial effect of important cells that fight against pathogens.¹² Vitamin D also activates the production of antimicrobial peptides which can be crucial in the eradication of bacterial and viral infections.¹⁰

Conclusion

Health and food authorities agree that meat is not a source or route of transmission of coronavirus. It is important that the population keeps following the general hygiene practices. And take into consideration the assistance of vitamin D found in meat towards the immune system.

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