



The Necessity of Nutrient Data on Processed Meat in African Diets

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Abstract

Introduction: Dietary protein is important in the diet of humans for growth and development and in the adult diet to help the body repair and regenerate cells particularly so in the elderly. Economic constraints and cultural preferences contribute to differences in food choices observed among socioeconomic groups in developing countries. Ready-to-eat processed meat products form a significant part of the diets particularly true for vulnerable groups. It can be attributed to their low cost, versatility, extended shelf-life and availability on the market. Value-added processed meat consumption has increased significantly since 1994.

Methods and Approaches: The objective of the study was to evaluate the nutrient composition of processed meats as analysed compared to the nutrient content reported in food composition tables.

Current data on the nutrient composition of processed meat in food composition tables in Africa were reviewed. Additionally, seven commonly consumed processed meat products were analysed for nutrient content and compared to label values and values as stated in food composition tables.

Findings and Interpretations: Of all the food items found in the Food Composition Tables for South Africa, West Africa and Nigeria only thirteen, two and one processed meat items are listed in the respective tables. All the data for processed meat is borrowed from the American Food Composition Tables and none of African origin. However, these products differ substantially from those from American origin, e.g., the polony value is derived from bologna. There are significant differences in the nutritional value of different processed meats; protein values ranged from 8.6g – 17.8g/100g, from 0.34g – 2.81g/100g for iron and from 0.54g – 1.62g/100g for zinc respectively.

Conclusion: Processed meat is not a homogeneous food group, and the composition of these products varies widely. It is important to study dietary quality for distinct meat categories and to inform the development of specific appropriate food-based dietary guidelines at country and regional level.

Biography: Hettie Schönfeldt

Professor Schönfeldt is an advocate for nutrition research, promoting excellence through the creation, translation, and dissemination of science-based information into policies, programmes and training programmes both nationally, and internationally. She publishes evidence on why country specific food composition data is essential to make it possible to interpret the dietary outcomes of countries. She serves

as scientific advisor to AFROFOODS, a network on the African continent, forming part of IUNS/UNU/FAO INFOODS Task Force. She is a co- director of the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) Centre of Excellence in Food Security and holds a Department of Science and Innovation /National Research Foundation Research Chairs Initiative in Nutrition and Food Security.