



Contribution of Updating the Portuguese Food Composition Table to Healthy and Sustainable Food Choices

Francisco Ravasco¹; Maria da Graça Dias¹

¹ Monitoring and Surveillance Unit, Food and Nutrition Department, National Institute of Health Doutor Ricardo Jorge, IP

Background and Objectives

Portuguese Food Composition Table (FCT) is an essential tool for healthcare professionals, researchers, food industry, and consumers, providing detailed information on the nutritional value of foods. In the current context, where the promotion of healthier and more sustainable diets is a priority, the continuous updating of the FCT is indispensable to accurately reflect changes in food production, product reformulation, and consumption patterns. This work aims to highlight the priorities of updating the Portuguese FCT in order to fill gaps in existing data.



Fig. 1 – Portuguese Food Composition Table (FCT).

Methods

The update of the FCT is a continuous and internationally harmonized process, using FoodCASE[®] software, which is used by nine countries and various European projects following EuroFIR requirements.

Data are generated according to EuroFIR standards, ensuring quality and comparability. The inclusion of new foods is based on the National Food and Physical Activity Survey (2015-2016), with a special focus on plant-based foods, following dietary tendencies and identifying gaps. Laboratory analyses are conducted at the National Institute of Health Doutor Ricardo Jorge, using samples representative of national consumption. New foods are compiled using analytical data, extrapolation from analogous foods, international databases, and nutritional labelling.

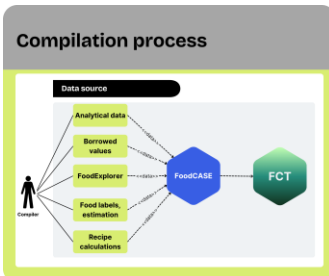


Fig. 2 – Sources and software for updating the FCT.

Results

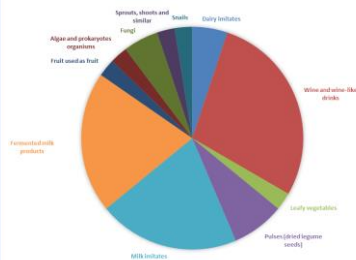


Fig. 3 - New foods added to the new version of the FCT

Identification of new foods has been based on the National Food and Physical Activity Survey (2015-2016), with a focus on those consumed by individuals following a vegetarian diet. Furthermore, additional food products were identified and comprehensively characterized through the collaborative efforts of the PortFIR's working group (GTTCa).

The new version of the FCT (v 7.0 - 2025) will include 1363 foods, classified in FoodEX2 up to the 3rd level and 50 components/nutrients, will include results for iodine and selenium and for the first time results for six carotenoids in vegetables and fruits. Introduces 39 new foods and approximately 1400 changes, including descriptions, removal of obsolete items, addition of edible portions, and value updates, considering the reduction of salt, sugars, and saturated fats in line with public health guidelines and industry trends.

FCT is freely available online, allows searches by keyword, food group, components, and alphabetical list, nutritional comparisons between foods within the same or different groups. Available at <https://portfir-insa.min-saude.pt/>

Conclusions

Updating the FCT is a fundamental step to ensure the quality and reliability of the nutritional information available. Regular updates will help guide public policy, support nutrition research, and promote healthier, more sustainable food choices. Strengthening international cooperation and leveraging new technologies for data collection and analysis will be key to ensuring a robust and up-to-date food composition database.