

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **A HEALTHY DIET MAY IMPROVE COGNITIVE AGEING**

**Milan, 4 July 2014 – Despite a lack of dietary recommendations for preserving brain health and cognition by major health organisations, existing data suggest how nutrients, food components and whole diets have an impact on cognitive ageing. ILSI Europe’s experts discussed about how a healthy diet may improve cognitive ageing in Milan on 3-4 July during a Workshop on ‘Nutrition for the Ageing Brain’.**

Since people aged 60 years and over are expected to increase from 605 million to 2 billion between 2000 and 2050, cognitive ageing acquires a growing significance. Existing research has demonstrated that what we eat or refrain from eating, may have an important impact on our mental performance and may affect cognitive decline, including dementia. Today 35.6 million people live with dementia worldwide and this figure is expected to double in 20 years. In 2010, Alzheimer and dementia cost the global economy \$604 billion.

Omega-3 fatty acids, B-vitamins and anti-oxidants are among the most widely investigated and promising nutritional compounds. Intake of a combination of nutrients, rather than nutrients taken in isolation, seems to be the best way to prevent cognitive decline. Folate, for instance, present in broccoli, spinach and dried legumes such as chickpeas, beans and lentils, requires to be taken in combination with other vitamins in order to exert positive effects. Numerous epidemiological studies indicate that long-term intake of a Mediterranean diet (emphasising fruits, vegetables, pulses and olive oil) correlates with better cognition in aged populations. Empirical data also show how physical exercise increases the effect of micronutrients in promoting better memory functions and thus reducing the risk of early onset dementia.

‘It is becoming widely accepted that lifestyle changes are the best protection against dementia, creating a massive opportunity for nutritional products and optimal diets’, commented Prof. Keith A. Wesnes, member of the Organising Committee of the Workshop on ‘Nutrition for the Ageing Brain’ in Milan on 3-4 July, organised by ILSI Europe.

Great opportunities remain for innovation to optimise neurodevelopment and reduce risk of cognitive decline.

## **About ILSI Europe**

Established in 1986, International Life Sciences Institute, Europe (ILSI Europe) fosters collaboration among the best scientists to provide evidence-based scientific consensus in the areas of nutrition, food safety, toxicology, risk assessment, and the environment. By facilitating their collaboration, ILSI Europe helps scientists from many sectors of society – public and private – to best address complex science and health issues by sharing their unique knowledge and perspectives.

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