

Foreword



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The eating habits and nutritional status of a population are crucial determinants of its health status. For this reason, it was essential to gain in-depth knowledge of how Catalans eat and what types of nutritional problems we have, with the aim of being able to promote those changes that would facilitate improved health and well being.

It is thus with great satisfaction that I present the results of the Catalan Nutritional Survey, a study conducted from 2002 to 2003 by a wide-ranging team of professionals under the sponsorship of the Health Department and in response to the need for information as outlined in the Catalan Health Plan. It represents the third nutrition study to be carried out in Catalonia since 1985, which has made our region a pioneer, not only in Spain but also throughout Europe, in providing a nutrition monitoring system that allows for the identification of trends occurring over the last 10 years, which comprises the principal theme of this monograph.

As you will be able to verify in the pages that this monograph of the *Journal of Public Health Nutrition* has dedicated to this important survey, a meticulous examination of the nutritional status of Catalans has been conducted. It defines those aspects of our eating habits that need to be improved, modified or promoted, and estimates the prevalence of overweight and obesity in the population as well as providing the necessary information for the development of food guides and nutrition policies

that are based on our population's consumption of foods, energy and nutrients. And most importantly, we have been able to compare results obtained from a similar survey conducted during 1992–93.

This survey represents a substantial amount of effort carried out not only by the General Direction of Public Health of the Health Department but also by the other institutions and individuals under the leadership of Dr Lluís Serra-Majem, to whom I would like to express my most sincere gratitude, with special recognition of the commitment on behalf of the Science Park of the University of Barcelona and the Foundation for Nutrition Research. The consumption data presented here, along with the extensive biochemical and anthropometric data obtained, provide a wealth of information that is useful not only for the evaluation of the current Health Plan but also for planning and developing our integrative strategy for health promotion through physical activity and healthy nutrition (PAAS) in Catalonia.

I am confident that the contents of these articles will also be of use for all health professionals, and especially those working in areas related to food, nutrition and dietetics, in the clinical as well as community-related aspects: companies (the food industry as well as food and catering services), the University and Health Administration. As the act of eating involves many sectors, this information will also be of interest to those working in public health, agriculture, the business world and mass media. It is also my desire that the conclusions drawn here help to maintain and improve our eating habits, a true legacy of our health and culture that should not be relinquished under any circumstances.