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Working Group 7

Prebiotics and Probiotics in Fermented Foods: Assessment of Their Contributions to Human Health

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Consumers and health care providers often seek out fermented foods as a source of probiotic organisms. Although many yogurts and cultured dairy products are supplemented with established probiotic strains, this practice is not common in other fermented foods. For those foods, the organisms responsible for fermentation of those foods are presumed to have probiotic activity. Additionally, some fermented foods may also contain prebiotic fibers, providing another potential health benefit. Presently, the scientific basis to support the probiotic, prebiotic, or even general health benefits of fermented foods is still emerging. Understanding how fermented foods contribute to human health is challenging because the microbiota present in many of these fermented products is highly variable and are only now being studied for their roles (and that of prebiotics) in health. The goal of this session is to assess the current science in the fields of medicine, nutrition, epidemiology, cell biology, and microbiology towards the provocative idea that fermented foods in general contain prebiotics and/or probiotics and make positive contributions to human health.