

## Capacity building for food composition data in Africa

*“Compilations of data on the nutritional composition of foods are essential tools for nutritionists, especially those concerned with monitoring adequacy of dietary intake, for linking diet to health and disease, for planning and prescription, education, food security, and for trade, export and legislation” (FoodComp, 2019).*

During the early-European winter, 24 participants from 20 countries attended a one-week training course on The Production and Use of Food Composition Data in Nutrition. The course was offered by the Division of Human Nutrition of Wageningen University and Graduate School VLAG (The Netherlands) in collaboration with other partners such as the University of Pretoria. The course was held at the Wageningen International Conference Center, The Netherlands from 1 – 6 December 2019.

The ARUA-UKRI GCRF Partnership Programme for Capacity Building Food Security for Africa (CaBFoodS-Africa)\* supported three participants to attend the course. These participants were: Dr. Mesfin Wogayehu Tenagashaw from Ethiopia, Zani Veldsman from South Africa and Radwa Donia from Egypt.

The course content was robust and covered a range of topics regarding the development, maintenance and use of a food composition databases, with specific focus on nutrition. Mesfin Wogayehu Tenagashaw from Ethiopia said: “the postgraduate course is structured to give a broad overview and better understanding of food and nutrition databases and data documentation. Topics covered included, food composition priorities in food and nutrition, sampling protocols and procedures, choice and evaluation of analytical methods, food nomenclature, using FoodEx 2 and LanguaL, recipe calculations, data quality, the of use and management of food composition databases with the use of FoodCase, and many more”.

Radwa Donia from Egypt described her experience at the course as “very useful as we are planning to update our food composition data to be more reliable and comprehensive by using new techniques and software. We hope to be in contact with you in the future to help us to accomplish our mission as well as to build an intact food database”.

Application of knowledge gained is key for the improvement of food composition data

in Africa. Zani Veldsman commented the following regarding how she will apply what she has learnt: “I will apply many of the skills and knowledge I have gained from this course in my research, which is aimed at generating food composition data for indigenous foods of South Africa. I will specifically focus on applying correct sampling protocols, selecting appropriate analytical methods, applying the correct food nomenclature to generate data of good quality for uptake in Food Composition Tables.”

Capacity building for food composition databases in Africa remains critical to better inform policies and programmes aimed at food security, diet and health. May the knowledge gained through this course contribute to improving and expanding food composition database activities in Africa.

- *All students would like to acknowledge the ARUA-UKRI GCRF Partnership Programme for Capacity Building in Food Security for Africa (CaBFoodS-Africa) for supporting them to attend this valuable training.*



Trainers and participants from 'The Production and Use of Food Composition Data in Nutrition' course held in Wageningen, 1 - 6 December 2019.



Prof Hettie Schönfeldt (far right) and the three participants supported by ARUA-UKRI GCRF Partnership Programme for Capacity Building in Food Security for Africa (CaBFoodS-Africa) - Radwa Donia, Mesfin Wogayehu Tenagashaw and Zani Veldsman (from left to right).