WN *Update*

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UN FAO. Slow Food
Sustainable food and nutrition: a new deal

Access April 2013 FAO CGRFA Biodiversity and nutrition report here
Access April 2013 FAO CGRFA Biodiversity and nutrition paper here
Access April 2013 FAO CGRFA Traditional food systems paper here
Access this month's Colin Tudge commentary on rational farming here



The UN Food and Agriculture Organization has made a three-year agreement with the Slow Food Movement to promote equitable, inclusive food systems

Editor's note
From now on *World Nutrition* will be paying special attention to food systems as a whole. We are giving more space to 'upstream' determinants of health and well-being. These crucially include agriculture systems. Get farming right, and food supplies will improve. Get food supplies right, and dietary patterns will be more healthy. Now please turn to *Colin Tudge's commentary on rational agriculture*, this month's cover feature.

Rome. Our news team reports

On 15 May the most momentous alliance between a United Nations agency and a civil society organisation ever has been agreed. This is between the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Slow Food Movement, whose director-general Jose Graziano (right) and president Carlo Petrini (left) are seen above shaking hands.

Under a three-year Memorandum of Agreement signed at FAO headquarters in Rome, the two organisations will join forces to promote more inclusive food and agriculture systems at local, national and international levels.

Actions will focus mainly on joint advocacy campaigns, strengthening local, regional and global networks and raising awareness of global initiatives such as the UN International Year of Family Farming in 2014. Actions will highlight the value of local foods and neglected food crops, and will also target market access for small-scale producers, enhancing conservation and use of biodiversity, reducing food losses and food waste, and improving animal welfare.

FAO director-general José Graziano says: 'Slow Food and FAO share the same vision of a sustainable and hunger-free world, safeguarding biodiversity for future generations'. Slow Food president Carlo Petrini says: 'Collaboration between FAO and Slow Food stems from our common purpose in promoting the wealth of local gastronomic traditions, in the defence of food biodiversity and in support of smallholder farmers and producers'.

The agreement includes protection of traditional food products and promoting culinary traditions and cultural heritage of rural communities. Slow Food, with its 100,00 members, can help inventories of local, indigenous and underused crops that are potentially important for food security, thus supporting the role of FAO in the appreciation and promotion of neglected crops.

FAO and Slow Food will work together to facilitate market access for small producers through producer organisations and cooperatives. Slow Food can help farmers to organise and shorten the food supply systems. *WN* editor Geoffrey Cannon comments: 'This is great news. *WN* will be carrying much more coverage on genuinely sustainable agriculture, and in October this year, the month of World Food Day, we will be featuring the Slow Food Movement'.

Box 1

Slow Food

Slow Food is an international, non-profit grassroots organization that aims to promote quality food produced and distributed in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner. It has over 100 000 members worldwide and is active in 150 countries. Thanks to its projects and initiatives the Slow Food Movement involves millions of people worldwide.

Anon. UN FAO. Slow Food Sustainable food and nutrition: a new deal. [Updates]. World Nutrition June 2013, ***4****, 6, 328-329*

G8. Food insecurity. Development aid
Big Food makes moves in Africa

Access pdf of June 2011 editorial here
Access pdf of June 2011 commentary here
Access pdf of August 2011 home page news story here
Access pdf of November 2012 home page news story here
Access pdf of February 2013 home page news story here
Access pdf of 10 June Guardian George Monbiot story here





What's on offer. Stealth bombers at a cost now estimated at $US 396 billion. Balance this with $US 4 billion now pledged to help end child undernutrition

London. Our news team reports

In early June in London the UK prime minister and the Brazilian vice-president chaired a 'nutrition for growth summit' of 'G8' great powers. This 'New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition' promised to pledge more money to help conquer food insecurity, undernutrition and starvation especially of young children in the global South. A total of 'up to US 4.14 billion' was announced.

The overall sum translates into a doubling of funds from the current $US 418 million to about $US 900 million by 2020. The meeting amounted to a huge 'public-private partnership', with representatives of 24 governments, science organisations, and 28 corporations. The declared intention of the new 'compact' is to see that 500 million pregnant women and children benefit from effective nutrition interventions; to prevent at least 20 million children under 5 from being stunted; and to save 1.7 million lives by by more breastfeeding, and treatment of severe acute malnutrition.

The agreement sounds a great bargain. But this is no more than the cost of around 50 F35 'stealth' fighter planes, whose total cost to the US taxpayer is now estimated at just under $US 400 billion. International nutrition expert Ted Greiner says: 'But will this pledged money materialise? What will the money be spent on – efforts to encourage self-sufficiency in impoverished countries, or patchwork treatment such as ready-to-consume peanut paste? Also, sorry to sound so battle-weary, but where are these gigantic estimates of benefit coming from? It is extremely challenging to

reduce nutritional stunting without tackling poverty, and I doubt it is even possible through the kinds of superficial measures the G8 has been favouring so far'.

In *The Guardian*, *George Monbiot commented:* 'One of the stated purposes of the G8 conference is to save the people of Africa from starvation. To discharge this grave responsibility, the global powers have discovered, to their undoubted distress, that their corporations must extend their control and ownership of large parts of Africa. They will be in astonished possession of Africa's land, seed and markets'.

Patti Rundall of the International Baby Milk Action Network and the Conflict of Interest Coalition said of the meeting, held in Unilever House: 'Çorporate partnerships like these may well increase rather than decrease malnutrition. The emphasis on micronutrient interventions, rather than addressing poverty and access to real food, is the perfect cover for marketing of fortified commercial products. There is no point talking about breastfeeding and how marvellous it is, if you don't protect it. That means bringing in laws to tie corporations down. Not something that sits well with the partnership approach. Businesses have a role in development, but only after health policies are set'. See Box 1.

Box 1

The meaning of the London nutrition summit

Extract from report in 7 June issue of the New Statesman. 'A key topic is the G8's "New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition"... launched during the US G8 presidency last year. There's plenty in it to benefit Unilever and the other multinationals – including Cargill, Monsanto and Syngenta – who have signed up.

'The New Alliance provides opportunities for these companies to 'invest' in African economies, with support from the public purse of the G8 countries including £395 million from the UK aid budget...So far the New Alliance involves Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Tanzania, with Benin, Malawi, Nigeria and Senegal set to join imminently. As part of the 'cooperation agreements' being set up between G8 governments, multinationals and African governments, the recipient countries of this 'investment' are being required to make policy commitments with far-reaching consequences for their farmers. From phasing out controls on exports to ending the free distribution of seeds, the whole initiative is set up to transfer power from domestic producers to big business.

'The New Alliance will also push African countries to make it easier for private investors to take over agricultural land. Such land-grabbing has already affected an area larger than Western Europe in this century, and its dispossession and impoverishment of small-scale farmers in Africa is well-documented..... Almost 200 African farmers' and campaigners' groups have rejected the G8's 'New Alliance' calling it a 'new wave of colonialism' in a statement sent to G8 leaders...They state that The G8's approach will only exacerbate hunger and inequality.

A new *Lancet* series has now revised estimates of the number of children under 5 in the world whose underlying cause of death is undernutrition. The new figure is 3.1 milion a year, 600,000 higher than previous estimates.

*Anon. G8. Food insecurity. Development aid. Big Food makes moves in Africa. [Updates]. World Nutrition June 2013, **4**, 6, 330-332*

Salt reduction strategies
Take them with a pinch of salt

Access May 2010 Michael Moss feature on the politics of salt here
Access March 2013 Philip James column here
Access March 2013 Geoffrey Cannon on Michael Moss's Salt Sugar Fat here
Access May 2013 Philip James column here



Above: George Dowdie, Michael Jacobson, Robert I-Can Lin, Chor-San Khoo, Joanne Slavin, Howard Moskowitz. Will industry reduce salt? Don't be so sure

Geneva. Our news team reports

In May the World Health Assembly, meeting at WHO headquarters in Geneva, pledged new targets for reduction of salt – meaning, salt added in the manufacture of ultra-processed products. In *WN* in March and May Philip James has written on the need to reduce salt production and consumption. Transnational food product manufacturers continue to announce their salt-reduction programmes. How much of this is or ever will be for real, in the absence of legally binding regulations? In March *WN* ran an extract from Michael Moss's new book *Salt Sugar Fat*. This includes interviews with former senior executives of corporations that depend for their profits on salty products. Will industry really comply? In a *New York Times feature* that has been a foundation for his book, Michael Moss had his doubts. An extract follows.

The hard sell on salt

What follows is the extract. The industry is working overtly and behind the scenes to fend off attacks, using a shifting set of tactics that have defeated similar efforts for 30 years. Industry insiders call the strategy 'delay and divert' and say companies have a powerful incentive to fight back: they crave salt as a low-cost way to create tastes and

textures. Doing without it risks losing customers, and replacing it with more expensive ingredients risks losing profits.

When health advocates first petitioned the federal government to regulate salt in 1978, food companies sponsored research aimed at casting doubt on the link between salt and hypertension. Two decades later, when federal officials tried to cut the salt in products labeled 'healthy,' companies argued that foods already low in sugar and fat would not sell with less salt.

Food companies then said they were redoubling efforts to reduce salt. But they say they can go only so far, so fast, without compromising tastes consumers have come to relish, or salt's ability to preserve food. 'We have to earn the consumer's trust every day,' said George Dowdie (above, left) a senior vice president of Campbell Soup. 'If you disappoint the consumer, there is no guarantee they will come back.'

Food companies say that reducing salt by 10 percent or so is easy, but that going further is difficult. Campbell says it has reduced salt in over 100 soups through a variety of changes, including using a sea salt with half the normal sodium. But some soups present bigger challenges 'It feels unfinished' Dr. Dowdie said while tasting vegetable beef soup that the company prepared with less sodium. 'The sweetness of the carrots isn't pronounced. The broth, you don't get an explosion of flavors.'

In 1978, Michael Jacobson (above, second from left), noticed the growing research linking sodium to hypertension. As director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, he petitioned the US federal regulatory Food and Drug Administration to reclassify salt from an ingredient like pepper or vinegar posing no health concerns, to a food additive that the agency could regulate by mandating limits or warning labels. The broadside touched off a scramble by producers to head off regulation.

Robert I-San Lin (third from left), then overseeing research and development at Frito-Lay, said he had been caught between corporate and public interests. 'The public's concern over high sodium intake is justifiable,' Dr. Lin wrote in a 1978 memo. His staff worked on ways to reduce sodium, including adjusting the fat in potato chips to lower the need for salt and using a finer salt crystal. But the company adopted few of his recommendations and joined the industry's resistance.

When the FDA pressured companies to reduce salt, the industry said that doing so would ruin the taste of the foods already low in sugar and fat. The government backed off. Companies also warned that reducing salt might force them to increase sugar in foods like peanut butter. Among those declining to join the initiative was Campbell. Chor-San Khoo (above, third from right), its vice president for global nutrition and health, said that the company would continue its own reduction plan, but that the pace being asked for 'was overly aggressive.' Kellogg said that lower salt guidelines were 'incompatible with a palatable diet'.

In official advisory committee meetings, some members nominated by the industry have voiced concerns about cutting salt. Joanne Slavin (above, second from right), a nutrition professor, told her colleagues that reducing salt in bread was difficult and warned of unintended consequences. It is an argument also made by food companies. 'Typically, sodium, sugar bounces around' she says. 'So you take sodium down in a product and then sugar a lot of times has to go up just for taste.'

Howard Moskowitz (above, right), a food scientist and consultant to major food manufacturers, said companies had not shown the same zeal in reducing salt as they had with sugars and fat. Low-calorie sweeteners opened a huge market of people eager to lose weight, he said, but salt is only a health concern, without the same market potential. He says: 'If all of a sudden people would demand lower salt because low salt makes them look younger, this problem would be solved overnight.'

*Anon. Salt reduction strategies. Take them with a pinch of salt [Updates]. World Nutrition June 2013, **4**, 6, 332-334*

The Food System. Big Food
Mexico: Let them eat chips



Access July 2012 PLoS Medicine paper on Big Food here
Access November 2012 WN commentary on Latin American food law here
Access December 2012 WN commentary on The Food System here
Access February 2013 The Lancet summary of paper on Profits and Pandemics here
Access 2013 book summary obesity in Mexico Rivera et al here
Access 2013 PAHO paper obesity in Mexico Jacoby et al here
Access April 2013 British Medical Journal on Mexican crusade here
Access May 2013 letter to the Mexican president here

Mexico City. Our news team reports

World Nutrition and *The Lancet* have recently emphasised the deep penetration of transnational industry into countries in the global South, with consequent soaring rates of obesity and diabetes (1,2). Mexico is an appalling example.

The chart below (left) shows Mexico with an obesity rate of 30 per cent, second to the US at 34 per cent, highest of all but some small countries. That was 2009. Figures from 2012 show that obesity in Mexico at 35 per cent, is higher than the US. (3).



Mexican president Enrique Peña Neto has signed a deal with transnational corporations to conquer hunger in Mexico. Meanwhile rates of obesity soar

A number of international organisations have now sent an open letter to the Mexican president Enrique Peña Neto (above, right) (4). This says, in part: 'Obesity is an underlying factor in the scourge of many chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, strokes and several cancers, and is largely driven by the marketing of unhealthy fat, sugar, salt enriched foods which are often "ultra-processed" '

The letter is sent by eleven international civil society organisations, including Consumers' International, the International Association for the Study of Obesity, the International Obesity Task Force, the International Baby Milk Action Network, and the World Public Health Nutrition Association.

The letter continues: 'Your Ministry of Health has shown that Mexicans are 2-5 times more likely to have the diabetes and high blood pressure complications of weight gain than US citizens… Mexicans become more vulnerable as their diet deteriorates and the consumption of unhealthy manufactured and pre-prepared foods and sugar-rich drinks increases – steadily replacing traditional healthier dietary patterns. It is now predicted that the costs of treating these diseases will soon overwhelm your health services and already particularly affects the poor. If Mexico is to combat maternal and childhood malnutrition and obesity, it needs to take even more radical preventive steps than those adopted by the West'.



Obesity in Mexico is rocketing (left). Juan Rivera (right, centre) chairs a hearing on public health with (on his left) Walter Willett and Barry Popkin

What is the cause of these appalling rates of obesity in Mexico? A massive report recently published by the National University of Mexico (3) contains some telling information. An author of the report is Juan Rivera of Mexico's National Institute of Public Health, seen above (right, centre) with international colleagues (on his left) Walter Willett of the Harvard School of Public Health and Barry Popkin of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. They were discussing the impact of sweetened soft drinks on public health in Mexico.

The report shows that in 2010, consumption of Coca-Cola in Mexico per person was 160 litres, far higher than Chile and the US at under 100 litres, let alone Colombia at 30 litres (3). The main driving force is generally agreed to be the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has resulted in Mexico being flooded with cheapened degraded staple foods and ingredients, and cheap relentlessly marketed ultra-processed snack and drink products. Vicente Fox, the president of Mexico from 2000 to 2006, previously was the president of Coca-Cola in Mexico.

The open letter refers to a new development that public health leaders believe will increase obesity most of all among impoverished communities. The new 'crusade against hunger' approved by the Mexican president, is to be carried out in collaboration with PepsiCo and Nestlé. 'It is clear that the top strategic priority of these corporations is to change traditional food patterns in countries such as Mexico – a country described by UNESCO as having an *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity,* with one of the richest varieties of traditional foods and cultures – and to increase consumption of refined "ultra-processed foods" flavored mainly by fats, sugars, salt and artificial additives'. Commenting, the *British Medical Journal* (5) reports that other giant US-based corporations – Walmart, Kmart and 7 Eleven – are said also to be signing agreements with the Mexican government.

Their sweet business

The Nestlé plan, called 'My sweet business', is to teach 15,000 women in 12 of the country's most impoverished states how to make and sell puddings. The government of Mexico is evidently now sharing its public health nutrition duties with transnational corporations, perhaps as a sign of a process also apparent in other countries, whereby governments relinquish responsibility for the protection of public health and public goods to the 'private sector.

This latest move by the 'free-market'-friendly Mexican government is in stark contrast to the analyses and recommendations of leading independent public health experts in the region, as reported last November (6). The success in Latin America of PepsiCo, the world's leading manufacturer of ultra-processed snacks, is indicated by the display (below) in a Brazilian airport food shop queue line in May. No fresh food was available. All the packages are of Pepsi products. There was no sign of any Pepsi 'good for you' products.



The main 'food' on sale in a Latin American airport shop in May. Cheetos, Ruffles and Doritos are all PepsiCo 'fun for you' ultra-processed products

Big Food Watch

Readers interested in supporting a network set up to watch and judge the actions of Transnational and other very large corporations in the global South, not only Latin America, please contact us at xxxxxxxxxxxxx,, with relevant career details and other experience.

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*Anon. The Food System. Big Food. Mexico: Let them eat chips. [Updates]. World Nutrition June 2013, **4**, 6, 334-337*

Nutrition of the brain

Human intelligence may be declining



Access pdf of September 2012 editorial here
Access pdf of September 2012 commentary here
Access pdf of November 2012 home page news story here
Access pdf of March 2013 commentary here

Our news team reports from New York



Usual interpretations of evolution assume a steady rise in intelligence since before and after the emergence of Homo sapiens. This may no longer be true

Editor's note

From now on *World Nutrition* will be paying more attention to health and well-being in all their aspects. These of course include physical health and protection against disease. As well as this, health and well-being have mental, emotional and – dare we say this – spiritual aspects. In particular, there is now a vast literature on the impact of nutrition on mental and intellectual function, which we intend to acknowledge. We invite contributions and ideas from readers. Please write to xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

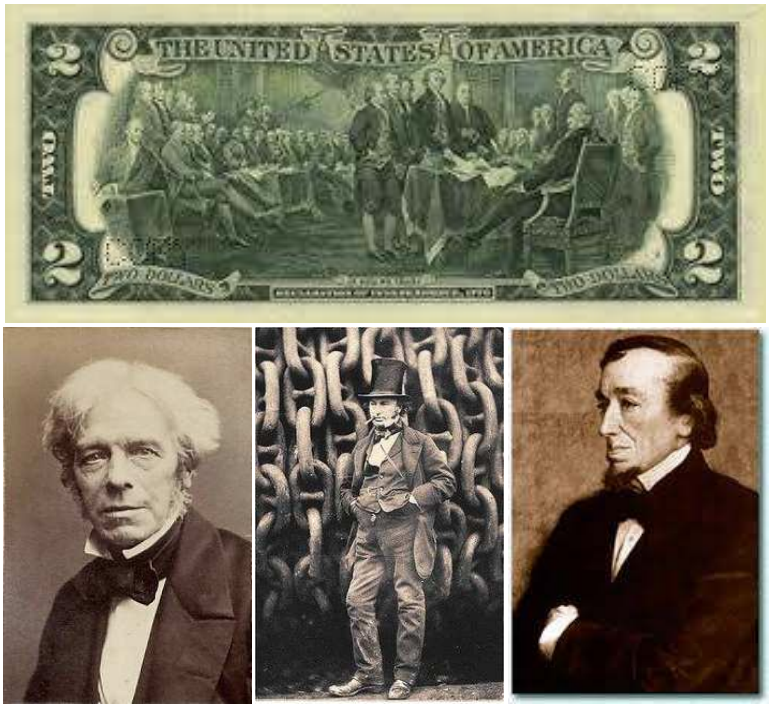
London. Our news team reports

Unkind observers of the US and UK political scene point out that whereas a number of presidents and prime ministers in the past were linguists, thinkers, authors, soldiers, inventors, orators, and possessed of other abilities, in the last 50 years the quality of politicians at least in these and other 'mature market economies' has sagged. Thus in the US Bill Clinton and Barack Obama are obviously very intelligent.

But real statesmen? Real leaders? Dependent as they were and are on patronage and public opinion polls, not really, compared with the past. Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair were and are obviously bright, but impressive only inasmuch as they held sway over their parties and the electorate. These days, where are the equals of Thomas Jefferson or Theodore Roosevelt, or David Lloyd George or Winston Churchill?

The same thought applies to lesser politicians, and to people in other fields of public life. It also applies generally. Why, for example, is the general standard of television programmes in the US and UK far lower than half a century or less ago? Why do there seem to be more acts of random violence and confusion? And why do so many people seen in the streets, more so in the US and the UK than in other countries, look and seem to be so disorganised, dishevelled and even disfigured? Or is this all an illusion, a sour observation of the 'things were better in my young day' type? Are the outrageous and terrifying mistakes made by bankers, just to take one example, normal risk business, merely magnified by the electronic technology that can cause a finance fool or crook to lose or steal $US 100 billion?

We may be getting less intelligent



US: Thomas Jefferson (top). UK: Michael Faraday, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, and Benjamin Disraeli (below). We may never see their like again

There is now a growing body of relatively speculative thought, and mounting evidence of the type now conventionally accepted as significant, that at least in some countries the average level of human intelligence is declining, rather fast. This idea flies in the face of the notion that on the whole, every day in every way things are

getting better and better. But why should they? This is a time in history when more and more people are observing that some things at least are getting worse and worse. So, what about intelligence?

Clearly there are plenty of people around who are super-intelligent and resourceful. An obvious example is the group of young men who have invented and developed artificial intelligence in the form of computers like the one on which this Update is being typed, in a form about to transmit from Brazil to Sweden and then go on-line globally, to readers of *WN* in over 80 countries.

But there is a growing suspicion, currently far short of certainty, that orthodox optimism about human intelligence is wrong. The orthodox view is that intelligence, as measured by IQ ('intelligence quotient'), the standard test of ability to think straight and understand concepts, is gradually increasing. The so-called 'Flynn Effect' claims that IQ on average has increased by 3 points a decade since the 1950s, at least in some countries.

The Victorians were cleverer

Now hold on to your hats. In mid-May the popular UK newspaper the *Daily Mail* ran a story with the eye-catching title. 'Were the Victorians cleverer than us? Research indicated a decline in brainpower and reflex speed. Study claims we have 14 IQ points less than our 19th century ancestors' (1). Here is what the story accurately reported, of a study published in *Intelligence* (2). 'It was an era of glorious scientific discovery. And the reason for the Victorians unprecedented success is simple – they were substantially cleverer than us'.

As stated in the study results: 'The Victorian era was characterised by great accomplishments. As great accomplishment is generally a product of high intelligence, we tested the hypothesis that the Victorians were actually cleverer than modern populations'. The results indicate a general 'pronounced decline in IQ since the Victorian era, three times bigger than previous theoretical estimates.'

The study compared reaction times since the late 1800s to the present day. Modern slower reflexes suggest we are less smart than our ancestors, with a loss of 1.23 IQ points per decade or 14 IQ points since Victorian times. An average man in 1889 had a reaction time of 183 milliseconds. This has slowed to 253 milliseconds in 2004. They found the same with women.

The research team, Michael Woodley, Jan te Nijenhuis and Raegan Murphy, from Umea University, Sweden, the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and University College, Cork, Ireland, said 'IQ scores are excellent predictors of job performance and those with higher intelligence are both more productive and creative'. Further, they suggested that any measurement error would probably conceal an even greater drop in intelligence.



Hugh Sinclair, Michael Crawford, David Horrobin, Stephen Cunnane, Ricardo Uauy, Andrew Sinclair. Scientists focused on nutrition of the brain

If the experiment is significant, why is this? Lack of essential fats, say scientists whose speciality is nourishment of the brain. Six are pictured above. Hugh Sinclair (1910-1990, left), pointed out that most of the solid matter of the brain is made from essential fatty acids, systematically removed by the processing of food. Michael Crawford (1930 – , next to left), states that civilisations arise from populations living near water, where fish, rich in essential oils, are abundant. David Horrobin (1939-2003, third from left) set up the Efamol business to make essential oil supplements. Stephen Cunnane, Ricardo Uuay and Andrew Sinclair are three distinguished academics who emphasise that the brain needs nourishment from substantial amounts of essential fats. The IQ results? Michael Crawford says: 'The brain is not protected from bad nutrition'. Which populations now are most intelligent? Does this explain the rise of the Japanese, whose traditional diet is rich in fish?

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*Anon. Nutrition of the brain. Human intelligence may be declining. [Updates]. World Nutrition June 2013, **4**, 6, 338-341*

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