

cambridge.org/pns

The Nutrition Society of Australia's 2024 Annual Scientific Meeting was held at the Aerial Sydney UTS Function Centre on 3rd to 6th December 2024

Conference on Food for All: Promoting Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Nutrition

Editorial

Cite this article: Biesiekierski JR, Hill AM, Parker HM, and Gill TP (2025). Conference on 'Food for All: Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Nutrition'. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, page 1 of 3. doi: [10.1017/S0029665125100578](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0029665125100578)

Received: 6 March 2025

Revised: 4 April 2025

Accepted: 24 April 2025

Keywords:

Equity; Diversity; Inclusion; Food security; Nutrition; Accessibility

Corresponding author:

Jessica R. Biesiekierski;
Email: jessica.biesiekierski@unimelb.edu.au

Jessica R. Biesiekierski¹ , Alison M. Hill², Helen M. Parker³ and Timothy P. Gill⁴

¹Human Nutrition Group, School of Agriculture, Food & Ecosystem Sciences, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia; ²Alliance for Research in Exercise, Nutrition and Activity (ARENA), Clinical and Health Sciences, University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia; ³Sydney School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia and ⁴The Obesity Collective and Charles Perkins Centre, The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

Abstract

The global nutrition community faces an urgent imperative to address inequities in food security while promoting inclusive approaches to nutrition science and practice. The Nutrition Society of Australia's 2024 Annual Scientific Meeting on 'Food for All: Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Nutrition' addressed this critical challenge through a 4-day programme of cutting-edge, multi-disciplinary research. The conference brought timely focus to key issues, including food access, cultural food practices, nutrition service accessibility, and inclusive research and education approaches. The conference featured public presentations, workshops, oral and poster sessions, symposia, and early career researcher sessions, and emphasised incorporating diverse perspectives while highlighting collaborative approaches to promoting equitable food systems. Coordinated efforts among researchers, healthcare providers, community organisations, industry partners and policymakers remain essential to advance inclusive nutrition practices and ensure equitable access to nutritious food for all populations.

Food for All

The Nutrition Society of Australia is committed to achieving health equity through good nutrition and the theme of this year's meeting, 'Food for All: Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Nutrition' was defined to identify and promote research and programmes addressing disadvantage in nutrition access and outcomes. Certain sections of the Australia population – including First Nations and remote communities, those with lower socio-economic status, certain migrant groups and refugees – experience higher rates of food insecurity, poorer nutrition status and elevated rates of nutrition-related chronic disease⁽¹⁾. Addressing health inequities will require a good understanding of the level of and nature of disparities and what drives these social gradients in nutrition within the community, as well as identification and evaluation of appropriate programmes and policies to help improve the situation. Unfortunately, dietary disparities and the level of diet-related diseases are worsening in Australia rather than improving. It is estimated that 27 500 Australians die a preventable death each year from an unhealthy diet and diseases associated with a poor diet, such as obesity, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, bowel and other cancers, are continuing to increase⁽²⁾. Food insecurity is also on the rise in Australia. More research focussed on these issues is needed to help improve the situation.

The programme of this Nutrition Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) provided a framework for research exploring these matters across the whole food and nutrition system from food production and processing through to the social, economic and political dimensions of the nutrition inequities.

Plenary and symposium highlights

The opening plenary at Aerial, UTS, chaired by Nutrition Society of Australia 2024 Local Organising Committee Chair Dr Helen Parker (University of Sydney), featured Professor David Raubenheimer (University of Sydney) and Laureate Professor Clare Collins (University of Newcastle) who emphasised nutrition science's evolution toward systems-level research, collaboration and policymaking. Professor Raubenheimer's nutritional geometry work with Professor Stephen Simpson, and Professor Collins' *No Money No Time* outreach initiatives provided substantive examples generating rich discussion.

The scientific meeting featured nine focused symposia addressing nutrition issues across diverse population groups and contemporary challenges. These spanned from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, First Nations peoples, and regional/rural

© The Author(s), 2025. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Nutrition Society.



populations, to emerging areas such as personalised nutrition, ultraprocessed foods, livestock for meat supply and food systems disruptions.

Symposia 1 to 3 ran concurrently. In Symposium 1, 'Nutrition research and practice issues within CALD and migrant communities', Professor Andre Renzaho (University of Western Sydney) and Dr Siew Lim (Monash University) discussed food insecurity and cultural considerations for designing nutrition interventions for specific populations groups such as pregnant women in culturally diverse communities. Symposium 2 focused on 'Economics of food and nutrition security' where Dr Meron Lewis (University of Queensland), Dr Christina Zorbas (Deakin University) and Professor Danielle Gallegos (Queensland University of Technology) analysed the relative costs and equity disparities of healthy diets, delving into the microeconomics and lived experience of food insecure families. Symposium 3 addressed 'Advances in "performance" nutrition', with Dr Joel Craddock (University of Wollongong) and Dr Naomi Kakoschke (CSIRO) discussing nutritional challenges in plant-based eating patterns and dietary impacts on physical and cognitive performance across the lifespan.

Day two featured three concurrent symposia. Symposium 4, 'Nutrition research and practice issues within First Nations communities', featured Ms Keziah Bennet-Brooks (The George Institute) and Dr Megan Ferguson (University of Queensland) discussing the importance of engaging and co-designing nutrition research and programmes with First Nations communities. In Symposium 5, 'Personalised nutrition and tailoring of nutrition messages', Dr Aida Brankovic (CSIRO) examined artificial intelligence applications in nutrition research, and Associate Professor Katherine Livingstone (Deakin University) presented the feasibility and acceptability of a personalised intervention to improve vegetable intake in young adults across rural Australia. Symposium 6, 'The societal role of meat', included Dr Di Mayberry (CSIRO) questioning current sustainability metrics for animal farming, Professor Frank Dunshea (University of Melbourne) highlighting livestock's ecological role in converting non-edible pasture to human nutrients, and Professor Robyn Alders (Australian National University) exploring mutually supportive human-animal relationships across developed and developing countries.

The final day featured three symposia addressing aging, food processing and food system challenges. In Symposium 7, 'Nutrition considerations for ageing and longevity', Professor Stephen Simpson (University of Sydney) applied nutritional geometry principles to explain how nutrient appetite and food environments influence aging and metabolic health. Professor Luigi Fontana (University of Sydney) presented evidence on how whole food and Mediterranean dietary patterns can slow age-related cellular damage. Dr Zhaoli Dai-Keller (University of New South Wales) addressed optimising later-life health through nutrition and lifestyle factors. Symposium 8, 'Ultra-processed foods: good, bad and ugly', featured contrasting perspectives from Professor Mark Lawrence (Deakin University) on policy implications and Associate Professor Jimmy Louie (Swinburne University), who challenged conventional categorisations of ultra-processed foods. Symposium 9, 'Nutrition implications of food system disruption', examined emerging challenges with Professor Jessica Fanzo (Columbia University, United States of America) discussing climate change impacts on global food supply and Associate Professor Dana Cordell (University of Technology

Sydney) addressing resource limitations in food production, particularly phosphorous scarcity.

Workshops

Building on the success of the 2023 joint Nutrition Society of Australia and Nutrition Society of New Zealand Scientific Meeting, the 2024 ASM held twelve pre-conference workshops over two concurrent sessions. These interactive sessions provided valuable network opportunities while exploring key issues in nutrition science and education. Morning workshops covered diverse topics including dietary assessment methodologies, personalised and aged care nutrition, career development and indigenous food perspectives. The afternoon featured the popular annual Student Masterclass on 'Networking for career success' facilitated by Dr Alison Booth (Deakin University), with expert panellists including Laureate Professor Clare Collins (University of Newcastle), Dr Emma Beckett (FOODiQ Global and University of New South Wales), and Dr Matthew Snelson (Monash University). Additional afternoon sessions addressed specialised topics including post-prandial metabolism, nutrition advocacy, national nutrition policy and data capabilities. The well-received workshops have become an integral component of the ASM format.

Other special symposiums and sessions

The ASM opened with a joint NSA and Charles Perkins Centre Public Symposium, 'Creating healthy and equitable food and nutrition environments'. Professor Karen Charlton (University of Wollongong) chaired this thought-provoking session featuring Associate Professor Ana Clara Duran (University of Campinas, Brazil), Professor Anne-Marie Thow (University of Sydney) and Dr Philip Baker (University of Sydney). Discussions examined food system equity issues, including industry profit structures, multi-stakeholderism and political influence. Speakers advocated for mandatory policies and highlighted unintended consequences of environmental initiatives. The symposium provided a strong foundation by addressing food system transformation pathways.

The Dairy Australia-sponsored panel session, 'Reducing health inequality through improved food and nutrition literacy', was chaired by Dr Emma Beckett (FoodIQ Global). This session featured expert panellists Professor Danielle Gallegos (Queensland University of Technology), Ingrid Mulder (OzHarvest) and Dr Malcolm Riley (CSIRO), who explored practical approaches to enhance nutrition literacy across diverse populations and address persistent health disparities.

The ASM offered complementary professional development opportunities for emerging nutrition scientists. The pre-conference Student Masterclass was enhanced by the lunchtime early career researcher 'Meet the Experts' session featuring Professor Lisa Wood, Professor Frank Dunshea, Professor Danielle Gallegos, Professor Mark Lawrence and Associate Professor Jessica Biesiekierski. This structured yet informal event connected students with experts from diverse nutrition-related fields spanning industry, government, public health and academia. Both events received positive feedback from participants, who valued the opportunity to gain career development insights and establish professional connections across the nutrition community.

Nutrition Society of Australia Awards of Excellence

The NSA Awards of Excellence session recognised outstanding contributions to nutrition science. Fellowships were awarded to Professor Mark Lawrence (Deakin University) for his distinguished work in public health nutrition policy and food systems sustainability, and Dr Sandra Iuliano (University of Melbourne) for her groundbreaking aged care nutrition research, particularly her landmark study demonstrating how dairy food fortification reduces falls and fractures in older adults. The prestigious NSA Medal was awarded to Professor Eugeni Roura (University of Queensland) for exceptional contributions to understanding gut nutrient sensing mechanisms and appetite modulation across humans and animals, including pioneering work in transgenerational nutrition. Associate Professor Jessica Biesiekierski (University of Melbourne) received the NSA Mid-career Researcher Award, recognising her excellence in gut symptom processes and diet-related mechanisms in gastrointestinal conditions during the 5–15-year post-PhD career stage. The session highlighted the remarkable breadth of Australian nutrition science excellence – spanning policy development, public health applications, fundamental biological mechanisms, and clinical nutrition innovations. All recipients acknowledged NSA's vital role in supporting career development and advancing nutrition science in Australia.

Closing panel discussion

The meeting concluded with a compelling panel discussion, 'Misinformation, disinformation and fraud in nutrition science', which generated significant audience engagement. Chaired by Professor Tim Gill (University of Sydney), the panel featured distinguished experts addressing complementary aspects of this critical issue: Professor Jennifer Byrne (University of Sydney) on scientific fraud detection and prevention, Laureate Professor Clare Collins (University of Newcastle) on nutrition misinformation patterns and impacts, and NSA Fellow Dr Rosemary Stanton (University of New South Wales) on disinformation in nutrition communications. The discussion explored pressing concerns, including scientific integrity challenges, predatory publishing practices, problematic academic metrics, social media's amplification of nutrition misinformation, and the distorting influence of commercial interests in nutrition guidance and policy development. This session provided a fitting conclusion by emphasising

the importance of evidence integrity in nutrition science and practice.

Summary

The 48th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Nutrition Society of Australia successfully brought critical focus to equity, diversity and inclusion in nutrition science – principles essential to addressing contemporary nutrition challenges but often underrepresented in research agendas. Attendees consistently praised the engaging and stimulating programme that balanced fundamental science with practical applications. The conference achieved exceptionally high participation levels, with presented research abstracts showcasing innovative methodologies and emerging research priorities across diverse nutrition domains. The meeting emphasised the necessity of collaborative, multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition challenges and highlighted pathways for translating research into policy and practice. By centring on equity considerations in nutrition science, the conference strengthened the foundation for developing more inclusive, culturally responsive and effective nutrition interventions to improve population health outcomes across diverse communities.

Acknowledgments. None.

Authorship. J.R.B., A.M.H., H.M.P. and T.P.G. drafted the manuscript. All authors approved the final version.

Financial support. The Dairy Australia session was supported by Dairy Australia; speakers were defined by NSA and the funder had no input into the content of the speakers' presentation. This work received no specific grant from any funding agency, commercial or not-for-profit sectors. JRB is supported by an Australian National Health and Medical Research Council Emerging Leadership Fellowship (APP2025943).

Conflicts of interest. There are no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Lewis M & Lee AJ (2021) Dietary inequity? A systematic scoping review of dietary intake in low socio-economic groups compared with high socio-economic groups in Australia. *Public Health Nutr* **24**, 393–411.
2. Dietitians Australia (2021) National Nutrition Strategy – Evidence Brief. https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/2022-02/DA_NationalNutritionStrategy_Brief.pdf (accessed 12 February 2025).