

## BACKGROUND

- The Canadian Sugar Institute (CSI) is a non-profit, national association representing the industry on nutrition and international trade.
- CSI informs and educates Canadians about sugars and healthy eating and advocates for science-based nutrition policies.
- CSI sponsors several events held across the country, including the Canadian Diabetes Association Conference, Dietitians of Canada National Conference and Dietitians of Canada Regional Conference.

## DEFINITIONS

- **Sugar** = sucrose (from sugar cane or sugar beet)
- **Sugars and syrups** (*Statistics Canada category*) = sugar and sugar syrups, maple syrup, and honey, but not corn sweeteners, e.g. high fructose corn syrup or glucose syrup
- **Added sugars** = all sugars added to foods, e.g. sugars and syrups, corn sweeteners, and other ingredients that act as a sweetener (e.g. concentrated fruit juice)
- **Sugars** = all monosaccharides and disaccharides

## RATIONALE

- There are many misconceptions surrounding sugar consumption and its contribution to weight gain.
- Added sugars consumption has not increased over recent decades in many countries, such as Canada, Australia, UK and the US [1,2], contrary to common perception.
- Sugars (i.e. sucrose and HFCS) containing foods are targeted as key contributors in rising obesity rates. However, consumption data trends show that sugars consumption in Canada has remained stable or modestly declined over the past four decades [3]. Scientific literature also does not support a link between sugars consumption and obesity rates [4].

## OBJECTIVES

- The overall purpose of this project was to determine health professionals' perceptions of sugars consumption trends.
- Objectives were to gather users' feedback of CSI resources and to assess dietitians' knowledge of trends in sugars and soft drink consumption in Canada.
- Information generated will provide direction for future CSI resources.

## METHODS

- From 2003-2011, conference attendees voluntarily completed CSI surveys.
- Surveys included questions on demographics, preferences for CSI resources and topics of interest and sugar-related knowledge.
- All data was analyzed using MS Office Excel 2007.

## RESULTS

### Respondents (n = 4478)

- Most were Ontarians (43%) and Anglophones (96%).

### Professions

- Professions represented: dietitians (60%), nurses (23%), physicians (3%), pharmacists (3%), researchers (3%), and other (8%).

- All dietitians, 84% of nurses, 80% of physicians and 53% of pharmacists noted that they often discussed nutrition information with their clients.

### CSI Resources

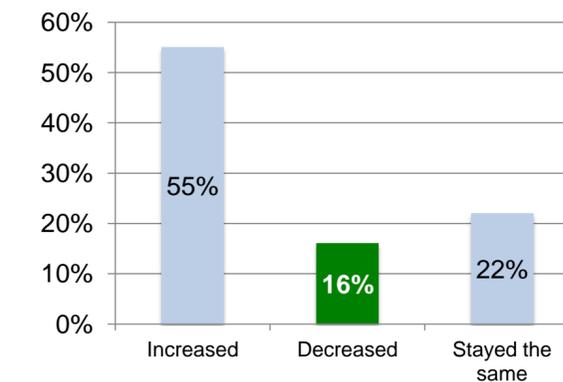
- Majority (76%) of respondents found CSI health professional resources useful, while CSI consumer resources and recipes were reported to be less useful (61% and 53% respectively).

- Top five topics of interest were: Glycemic Index, Type 2 diabetes, nutrition labelling, Dietary Reference Intakes / dietary guidelines and dental health.

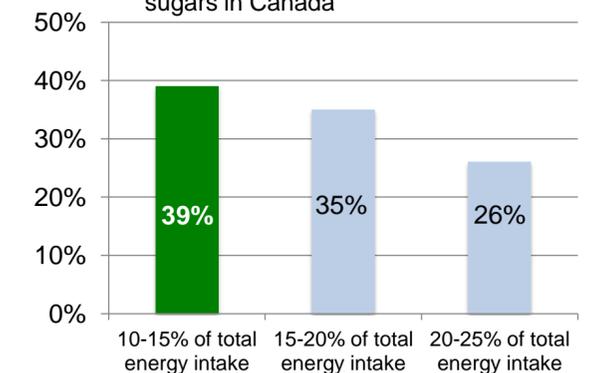
### Knowledge-Testing Questions

- Majority of dietitians (77%) were not aware that sugars and syrups consumption in Canada has decreased within the past four decades (Figure 1).
- Some dietitians (39%) correctly identified that 10-15% of Canadians' total energy intake is attributed to total added sugars (Figure 2).
- Less than half of dietitians (47%) were aware that HFCS is used to sweeten most soft drinks sold in Canada (Figure 3).
- Most dietitians (70%) were not aware that Canadian consumption of soft drinks is half that of Americans (Figure 4).

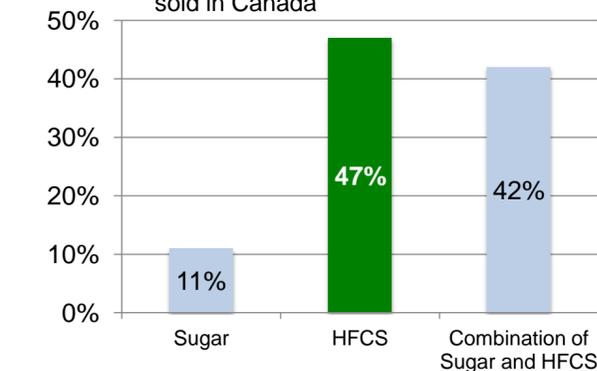
**Figure 1:** Dietitians' responses regarding trends in added sugars consumption in Canada



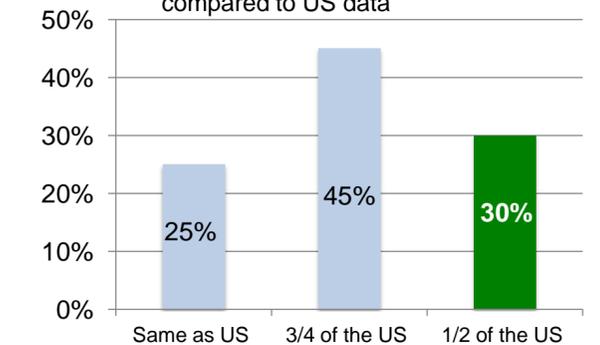
**Figure 2:** Dietitians' responses regarding estimated consumption of total added sugars in Canada



**Figure 3:** Dietitians' responses regarding the types of caloric sweeteners used in soft drinks sold in Canada



**Figure 4:** Dietitians' responses regarding trends in Canadian soft drink consumption compared to US data



Green bars indicate correct response

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- There appears to be a need for the effective transfer of evidence based information to dietitians and other health professionals regarding sugars and trends in sugars consumption.
- In addition to dietitians, other health professionals are providing nutritional advice to Canadians; dietitians should work closely with other health care professionals to ensure that the information provided is current and correct.
- CSI should continue to develop resources for dietitians and other health professionals to use in discussions with clients relating to carbohydrates and health.

## REFERENCES

- 1) J. Welsh, et. al July 13 2011 *AJCN epub*.
- 2) A. Barclay, et. al, 2011 *Nutrients*, 3: 491-50.
- 3) Statistics Canada, Food Statistics, 2011.
- 4) C. Ruxton, et. al 2009 *Crit Rev Food Sci Nutr* 50(1): 1-19.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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