International Symposium on Non-digestible Carbohydrate: Preface

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Summary
Recently, there has been an active movement for developing an international framework on investigations of the function and safety of foods. Under these circumstances, Vahouny Symposia and ILSI Japan have jointly planned to hold this symposium on non-digestible carbohydrate here in Tokyo.

The Vahouny Symposia have been held in Washington, DC every four years since 1981. The symposia are named in honor of the late Dr. George Vartkes Vahouny, who conceived and organized the first Washington Symposium in 1981. Dr. Vahouny believed the advancement in the science of dietary fiber and non-digestible carbohydrates would be facilitated if international scientists could meet in a collegial forum where issues could be discussed openly. All Vahouny Symposia continue to be organized with this goal in mind.

The International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) is a worldwide nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC established in 1978 to advance the understanding of scientific issues related to nutrition, food safety, toxicology, risk assessment and the environment. By bringing together scientists from academia, government, industry and the public sector, ILSI seeks to develop a balanced approach to solving problems of common concern for the wellbeing of the general public. ILSI Japan, established in 1981, is spearheading investigations into nutrition, biotechnology, tea components, food safety, functional foods, sugars, food fortification.

In this symposium, presentations and discussions have been done concerning the effects of non-digestible carbohydrates on the function of the digestive tract, the immune system, the mineral metabolism and the nitrogen metabolism; the relationship between non-digestible carbohydrates and diseases; new viewpoints on pro-biotics; glycemic response and food ingredients.

Our objective is to build an international consensus, from such an extensive point of view, on the function of carbohydrates including dietary fiber based on the latest scientific findings and to make proposals to the government.

I appreciate greatly the contributors for their exhaustive efforts in writing the best and most updated reviews on the role of non-digestive carbohydrates for health, and setting directions for future work in both science and industry.