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Dairy products on the Algerian market: Proportion of imitation and degree of processing**Bentayeb Ait Lounis Saïda***Faculty of Biological and Agricultural Sciences, Algeria*

Statement of the Problem: Algeria is the leading consumer of dairy products in North Africa. This is a fact. However, the nutritional quality of the latter remains unknown. The purpose of this study is to characterise the dairy products available on the Algerian market in order to assess whether they constitute a healthy and safe choice. To do this, we collected data on the labelling of 390 dairy products, including cheese, yoghurt, UHT milk and milk drinks, infant formula and dairy creams. We assessed their degree of processing according to the NOVA classification, as well as the proportion of imitation products. The study was carried out between March 2020 and August 2023. Findings: The results show that 88% are ultra-processed; 84% for 'cheese', 92% for dairy creams, 92% for 'yoghurt', 100% for infant formula, 92% for margarines and 36% for UHT milk/dairy drinks. As for imitation/analogous dairy products, the study revealed the following proportions: 100% for infant formula, 78% for butter/margarine, 18% for UHT milk/milk-based drinks, 54% for cheese, 2% for camembert and 75% for dairy cream. The harmful effects of consuming ultra-processed products on long-term health are increasingly documented in dozens of publications.

Conclusion & Significance: The findings of this study sound the alarm about the health risks to which Algerian consumers are exposed. Various scientific, economic and industrial bodies need to be involved in order to safeguard consumer health in both the short and long term. Food awareness and education campaigns should be organised.

Biography

Saïda Bentayeb is a teacher and researcher in the field of food science. She has been working for nearly ten years on the quality of food products on the Algerian market. Initially, she was interested in the quality of fats, particularly modified vegetable fat-based products. She is now looking at the degree of processing of food products, particularly dairy products. Its aim is to prevent and raise consumer awareness of the risk of consuming imitation and ultra-processed products.