Nut-7.1.Clearly define all outcomes, exposures, predictors, potential confounders, and effect modifiers. Give diagnostic criteria, if applicable.

Example 1. “The definition of whole grains applied in the current study was in accordance with that of the American Association of Cereal Chemists and is as follows: “Whole grains shall consist of the intact, ground, cracked or flaked caryopsis, whose principal anatomical components—the starchy endosperm, germ, and bran—are current in the same relative proportions as they exist in the intact caryopsis.” Cereal species investigated in the current study were rye, wheat, oats, barley, rice, millet, corn, and maize (dried); triticale; and sorghum and durra. Whole-grain intake was expressed by the following 2 different methods to calculate intake: 1) intake of whole-grain products (grams of product per day) was calculated and consisted of 4 product categories that contained either solely whole-grain products (rye bread, whole-grain bread, or oat meal) or were dominated by whole-grain products (>75%; crisp bread); 2) to quantify the absolute amount of whole grain consumed, total whole- grain (grams of whole grain per day) intake was calculated”

Explanation.

To assess the health benefits of a specific dietary exposure, and to compare findings across studies, it is essential that the examined dietary exposures are clearly de- fined. Food security indicators or measures should be clearly described when used as proxy for or an indicator of dietary intake. When the exposure variables are food groups, the components of each aggregated food group should be clearly described. When assessing the health properties of specific food items, it is helpful to specify the scientific or taxonomical names of foods, because the nutritional composition of food is strongly related to species, cultivar, and variety. The units used should be clearly presented (e.g., servings per day, grams per day, and liters per week). In reports of complex dietary exposures, it is helpful to use standardized approaches (if available) that uniformly describe, classify, and quantify exposures. For example, recommendations for reporting whole-grain intake in observational and intervention studies have been published.

In some circumstances, a high level of detail may be justified. Thus, it may be helpful to indicate recipes and report whether food intake was based on raw or cooked foods (i.e., food preparation method). In addition, the report should include how food intakes were converted into nutrients or food components by specifying the units, method of calculating intakes, and the food-composition database (see also Nut-8.2). When relevant, the full definition of non-nutrient food components (e.g., chemical form of the compounds), and the units, should be provided. Similarly, information on the method of the biochemical analysis and relevant documentation is helpful.