

GIDA PLUS

Food and Nutrition Meetings -7

EVENT REPORT

The seventh edition of the “Food Plus: Food and Nutrition Meetings” series, jointly organized by the Food, Beverage and Agricultural Policies Research Association (GIFT) and the Nutrition Institute, took place in Ankara on 17 February 2026. We came together under the theme of “Almond Day”.

According to the Türkiye Nutrition and Health Survey (TBSA) 2017 results, the proportion of individuals who never consume tree nuts (hazelnuts, pistachios, walnuts, etc.) is 7.9%, those who consume them daily is 16.7%, and those who consume them 4–5 times per week is 9.0%. Based on TBSA results, average daily intake increased from 7.5 grams in 2010 to 10.8 grams in 2017. With a recommended daily intake of 30 grams, this meeting aimed to draw attention to the need to increase nut consumption and to support the development of value-added products in the nuts sector.

Since 2016, GIFT has undertaken various initiatives to develop policies in the fields of food, agriculture, and nutrition, while the Nutrition Institute established within GIFT focuses on food and nutrition literacy, fact-checking, and malnutrition.

46

Participants

3



Presentations



17 February



Ankara

WHO
OHM
WMA

Did We Host

In this event, we extend our thanks to the following institutions and stakeholders for their support and for sharing their knowledge and expertise:

- Ministry of Health, Directorate General of Public Health, Department of Healthy Nutrition and Active Life
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, General Directorate of Food and Control
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Department of Training and Publications
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Youth Council
- Ministry of Trade, Directorate General of Consumer Protection and Market Surveillance
- Management of the Nuts Industrialists and Businesspeople Association (TÜKSIAD)
- Almond Board of California and Zelome
- TÜBİTAK, Turkish Dietetic Association, Turkish Pasta Industrialists Association (TMSD)
- Hacettepe University Departments of Nutrition and Dietetics and Food Engineering; Ankara University Department of Food Engineering; and field-based nutrition professionals
- Valued industry representatives

What Did We Discuss?

We opened the program with a presentation by **Murat Yıldırım, Chairman of the Board of TÜKSiAD**, titled “Value-Added Strategies in the Nuts Sector: Transitioning from Raw Product to Branded Value.” Yıldırım explained how and why value should be created in the sector, emphasizing four critical components of value creation: creating value, R&D processes, packaging, and marketing. He underlined that the key is not to sell nuts, but to sell “value,” and shared good practice examples from Türkiye and global markets.



The second speaker of the day was **Dietitian Serkan Kasapoğlu, an expert from the Ministry of Health, Directorate General of Public Health, Department of Healthy Nutrition and Active Life**, with a presentation titled “Nuts and Health: Recommendations from the Turkish Dietary Guidelines.” The presentation emphasized that nuts (almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, pistachios, peanuts, etc.) have an important role in healthy diets and that regular consumption is positively associated with health indicators due to their richness in plant-based protein, unsaturated fatty acids, fiber, and various vitamins and minerals. It was noted that nut consumption is often discussed alongside findings such as reduced cardiovascular risk, lower LDL cholesterol, reduced inflammation, and decreased risk of type 2 diabetes and mortality. The recommendation for adults was stated as consuming approximately 30 grams (a handful) of nuts at least 4–5 days per week, and it was highlighted that this approach could provide healthier alternatives to high-salt intake and refined carbohydrate-heavy snacking habits.



In the section addressing consumption levels in Türkiye, it was noted that nut intake remains below recommended levels and that irregular consumption is observed particularly among children and adolescents. Referring to 2017 data, it was shared that 7.9% of individuals never consume tree nuts, 16.7% consume them daily, and 9.0% consume them 4–5 times per week; although consumption increased from 2010 to 2017, total daily intake was still reported to remain low. It was also stated that salted/roasted products are commonly preferred, that salted nuts may contain 150–300 mg sodium per 30-gram portion, and therefore choosing unsalted/natural forms is important. Potential policy steps mentioned included positioning unsalted nuts in school canteens as alternatives to unhealthy packaged snacks, and exploring national communication campaigns and sector collaborations aimed at salt reduction.

After the break, we listened to the Almond Board of California, presented as a good-practice model for the nuts sector. The introduction of the **Almond Board of California**—which will now operate in Türkiye—was delivered by its **Türkiye Representative, İrem Yakışıklı**. The presentation covered the almond export and consumption landscape in Türkiye and globally, and highlighted the role of



research and innovation in expanding the market for value-added almond-based products. At an institutional level, it was stated that the organization works with more than 7,600 family farms in California and that approximately 80% of global almond supply is sourced from California. It was emphasized that, for the health and welfare of bees—described as the greatest allies of almond orchards—86% of family farms are “bee-friendly certified.” It was also noted that almond waste rates remain below 1%, almond trees store 30 million tons of carbon, and the 1.9 kg CO₂eq carbon footprint value was highlighted as relatively low compared to certain other products.

The presentation also discussed how almonds align with consumer trends: growing demand for plant-based products and dairy alternatives, and expanding almond pro-

duct variety (almond flour, almond milk/beverages, almond butter, almond oil, etc.) in gluten-free/lactose-free “allergen-friendly” formulations. In nutritional terms, it was stated that a handful of almonds (28 grams/23 almonds) provides 6 g protein, 7.3 mg vitamin E, 76 mg magnesium, 4 g fiber, and 9 g monounsaturated fatty acids, and that monounsaturated fatty acids are associated with reducing LDL cholesterol. Scientifically, it was noted that the Almond Board of California has a 30+ year research track record and 200+ peer-reviewed publications, with reference made to a 2003 “heart health claim.” A link was also established to the EAT-Lancet Commission’s 2025 work, emphasizing a goal to contribute to a broader vision of a scientific and sustainable food system. Next steps were listed as compiling scientific evidence on almonds, conducting almond-specific recipe R&D, and initiatives aimed at increasing shelf visibility of value-added almond-containing products.

In the final presentation of the day, we listened to Zelome, another good-practice example in the sector. Zelome was presented as a brand established to bring Luk Botanik’s long-standing R&D and production infrastructure—based on supercritical CO₂ extraction technology—into consumer-oriented functional food products. It was emphasized

that the brand’s starting point is to process plant-based raw materials, especially nuts such as almonds and pumpkin seeds, through single-ingredient and clean processes, transforming them into products that can be easily integrated into daily diets. Zelome’s portfolio was described as consisting of plant-based proteins, functional oils, and plant extracts, offering an alternative model that addresses the common challenges of “over-processing” and “label complexity” in the plant-based protein category by combining transparency, nutrient density, and taste performance. The presentation also underlined that protein needs are not limited to athletes; plant-based proteins are increasingly relevant to a broader consumer base, particularly for meal balance, satiety duration, and improving overall diet quality.

The session further explained that supercritical CO₂ technology enables selective and controlled extraction without leaving solvent residues, allowing the production of nutritionally richer contents with increased protein and fiber density. Using Zelome as an example, it was emphasized that food processing is not inherently something to avoid; when approached through the right technology, transparent production practices, and regulatory compliance, it can become a tool that enhances both nutritional quality and consumer trust. In addition, it was noted that rising protein demand toward 2050 and the shift toward plant-based sources present significant opportunities for the nuts sector in terms of value-added product development, functional ingredient production, and innovative business models. Such innovations were described as carrying strategic potential for Türkiye—not only commercially, but also in strengthening food and nutrition literacy and expanding technology-based production capacity.



Event Outputs

Three Policy Recommendations

At the end of the Food and Nutrition Meetings session, with contributions from participants, we identified three policy recommendations on how to increase value-added production in Türkiye’s nuts sector:

1. Organize communication efforts to improve food and nutrition literacy together with public authorities, industry, academia, and relevant civil society organizations
2. Develop new financing models specifically for innovative product-producing companies in the nuts sector
3. Ensure and improve quality standards for nuts processing facilities.

