International Committee on Systematic Bacteriology
Subcommittee on the Taxonomy of *Bifidobacterium*, *Lactobacillus*, and Related Organisms

Statement of the 15th International Symposium on Food Microbiology, 31 August to 3 September 1993,
Bingen, Germany

Food safety assurance today includes discussion on the safe use of lactobacilli in biotechnology because a national authority suggests that some species be classified in the same risk category as *Salmonella* spp., *Shigella* spp., or staphylococci. This aspect has been critically discussed in the sessions of the subcommittee on *Bifidobacterium*, *Lactobacillus*, and related organisms.

The suggested risk represented by lactobacilli (regardless of species) and by related organisms is by no means substantiated by nutritional or clinical facts.

(i) For several decades, the widespread, safe, and uncomplicated ingestion of these bacteria, which are used in food processing or various preparations in the food industry, has followed centuries of empirical use in food fermentation without evidence of adverse effects on health.

(ii) The scientific literature indicates that the clinical occur-

rence of these bacteria is extremely rare and requires initial factors such as an underlying disease or immunodeficiency and most often an endogenous portal of entry. Furthermore, because a strain of a particular species is involved in an infection, it does not follow that other strains of the same species will be involved in the same manner. Evidence supporting this distinction was presented during the session of the subcommittee.

Therefore, the subcommittee on *Bifidobacterium*, *Lactobacillus*, and related organisms does not support the view that there is a general, elevated risk in the use of these bacteria.

The association of the subcommittee activities with the 15th International Symposium on FOOD MICRO '93 proved to be very effective.

E. Lauer, Chairman