

Health, the environment and traditional foods

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Food is central to life

but also

**plays an important role
in the environment**

**Food production is close to exceed
environmental limits**

**The question is,
can we combine proper nutrition
with
preservation of our environment?**

“Countries, communities and cultures that maintain their own traditional food systems

are better able

to conserve local food specialities with a corresponding diversity of crop varieties and animal breeds.

They are also more likely to show a lower prevalence of diet-related chronic diseases.

The Mediterranean diet offers a clear example”.



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



For the production of traditional foods , local products are generally used.

Cultivation of local products contributes to a sustainable environment and employment of local people,

thus

promoting the balance between the territory and the people

**Several traditional foods could
represent healthy and
ecologically friendly choices
that also support local economies**

Nutrition claims: a potentially important tool for the endorsement of Mediterranean traditional foods

**Investigation of the potential of 194 traditional
Greek foods to bear nutrition claims**

***Vasilopoulou, Dilis & Trichopoulou.
Mediterranean Journal of Nutrition and Metabolism, 2013.***

**The average number of claims
per Greek traditional food was 5**

**Overall, about 1024 nutrition claims
were relevant for the 194 traditional foods studied**

**Of those claims, 529 were related to
vitamins and minerals**

Importance of Studying Traditional Foods

For many, reputation for health properties

Promotion of local biodiversity

Expression of culture, history and lifestyle

**Development and economic sustainability
of rural areas**

NOVA classification system

already been applied to data from more than 20 countries

**Enables systematic attention to be paid
to industrial food processing**

Contribution of foodstuffs classified by degree of industrial processing in household in Greece

<u>Food groups and food items</u>	<u>% of total energy</u>
Group 1: Unprocessed and minimally processed foods	26.2
Group 2: Moderately processed culinary ingredients	41.3
Group 3: Ready-to-consume products	32.5
<i>Processed products</i>	<i>7.4</i>
<i>Ultra-processed products</i>	<i>25.1</i>

Source: DAFNE databank

Market power readily translates into political power.

Few governments prioritize health over big business

Dr Margaret Chan

Director-General of the World Health Organization

Will traditional dietary patterns survive ?

There is consensus in the international scientific literature that dietary patterns may be more relevant than specific foods, and such dietary patterns, particularly the ecologically friendly Mediterranean diet, merit the attention of EU public health officials.

It has also been shown that variants of the Mediterranean diet are feasible choices even for non-Mediterranean countries.

Mediterranean diet has been consistently shown, in Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean populations, to promote good health and longevity.

How can we preserve this knowledge for the future generations?

Are we doing enough to support traditional dietary patterns

rather

than continuously stating how good these diet are ?

- **Safeguard or reintroduce traditional foods**
- **Promote engagement of potential stakeholders, from nutrition scientists to environmental experts, to culinary leaders**
- **Take steps to promote food biodiversity and sustainable ecosystems**

Dietary patterns may be more relevant than specific foods

**Health promoting dietary patterns, notably patterns
relying on locally produced ecologically friendly foods**

merit

the attention of EU public health officials



**As individuals and
as members of social groups
we should do our best to transmit
the knowledge and the practice of
the traditional dietary patterns
to the generations to come
in order to**

Clay statuette of a woman teaching her daughter how to cook.
Boston Museum of Fine Arts 5th century BC.



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- **Contribute to better health**
- **Preserve cultural tradition**
- **Support agricultural economy**
- **Protect the environment**

**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR ATTENTION**

