

Biodiversity and sustainable diets United against Hunger

Mediterranean diet as an example of a sustainable diet

The Mediterranean diet is considered as a paragon, absolute model, among the world's diets. It is difficult to know which specific dietary pattern we speak about, because of the wide diversity of food rations in the Mediterranean area: cereals, pulses predominate in the South, cereals, pulses, sugar and milk in the Balkans and western-style food in the North Mediterranean countries with cereals, meat, fats, legumes. Moreover, These consumption patterns have changed considerably; they are moving away from the Cretan diet, a symbol of an "ideal" Food. This evolution is linked to significant changes in lifestyles, with a feminization of economic life, a family leave home, compulsory school which standardizes the tastes, the emergence or the thrust of super and hypermarkets, the decline of traditional products. The consequences of these changes are a decline in food quality and a rise in overweight and obesity.

The reference diet is the diet of Crete in the late 60s. Is it provided sustainable?

Various authors have commented on the design of sustainable food. Some emphasize healthy food and alternative agriculture, while others focus on the link between health and welfare, or environmental practices on consumers. Others believe that sustainable food is part of a sustainable food system that would combine the natural sciences and social sciences. We believe that sustainable food is the one that combines the protection of nutrients, environmental conservation, community development through social and economic aspects.

We can say that the Traditional Mediterranean diet may be considered as sustainable in part because of (i) a great diversity that ensures food nutritional quality of diet and biodiversity, (ii) a variety of food practices and food preparation techniques, (iii) Main foodstuffs demonstrated as beneficial to health: olive oil, fish, fruits and vegetable, pulses, fermented milk, spices..., (iv) a strong commitment to culture and traditions, (v) a respect for human nature and seasonality, (vi) a diversity of landscapes that contribute to the welfare, (vii) a less demanding food in primary energy and having in priori less environmental impact, due to low consumption animal products, (viii) pastoralism with the importance of meadows favourable to carbon sequestration, and to meat quality.

On the other hand no analysis of economic and social impact has been achieved. We cannot conclude on this aspect of Sustainability.

In conclusion, the Mediterranean diet has numerous virtues. We must ensure that modernity and globalization do not alter its characteristics of Sustainability. Further research is needed on social aspects of sustainable production and their actual environmental impact.