

Mediterranean Diet conceptual model and future trends of its use in Portugal

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Summary

The aim of this study was to present a new model for the Mediterranean Diet definition and to identify the major trends for the use of the Mediterranean Diet concept by 2028, in Portugal. A Delphi panel was implemented with 28 experts with solid knowledge and understanding of the Mediterranean Diet concept. The first round evaluated the degree of expert self-knowledge, which also contributed to the final questionnaire building. It was answered in 2 successive rounds with 21 statements, divided into 2 dimensions: Mediterranean Diet concept and use. A Mediterranean Diet model definition was produced with 73.8% of agreement. Culture, education, environment, health, food industry/distribution and tourism were identified as the future trends of Mediterranean Diet use areas. The model presented can be used as a pedagogical tool. For the first time, it was possible to explore the future trends of Mediterranean Diet use, which can help with the initiatives to safeguard the Mediterranean Diet concept.

Key words: Mediterranean Diet conceptual map, Delphi, Mediterranean Diet, trends

INTRODUCTION

A recent publication of the EAT-Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems highlighted the importance of the relation between food, environment and health (Willett *et al.*, 2019). Nowadays, we are in the Anthropocene, 'a geological epoch that is characterized by humanity being the dominating driver of change on Earth' (Willett *et al.*, 2019) and it is important to promote the discussion about strategies that can improve the food systems and the population diets to provide for the growing world population. Another aspect that marks the current world agenda is the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by all United

Nations Member States in 2015 (United Nations, 2015). It represents 17 Sustainable Development Goals mainly about people, the planet, peace, prosperity and partnership (United Nations, 2015).

The Mediterranean Diet can be part of the strategy to respond to both situations identified above, because it represents a very well-studied cultural model, with a positive impact on health, in the environment preservation, and cohesion between people. The distinction awarded to the Mediterranean Diet as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2013a) initiated a

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