

Comprehensive Benefits of Applying a Sustainable Mediterranean Diet

Elsa M Gonçalves^{1,2*} and Marta Abreu^{1,3}

¹UTI/Unidade de Tecnologia e Inovação, Instituto Nacional de Investigação Veterinária e Agrária, Oeiras, Portugal

²GeoBiotec - GeoBioTec Research Institute, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Campus de Caparica, Caparica, Portugal

³LEAF - Linking Landscape, Environment, Agriculture and Food, Instituto Superior de Agronomia, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

*Corresponding Author: Elsa M Gonçalves, UTI/Unidade de Tecnologia e Inovação, Instituto Nacional de Investigação Veterinária e Agrária, Oeiras and GeoBiotec - GeoBioTec Research Institute, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Campus de Caparica, Caparica, Portugal.

Received: August 28, 2019; Published: September 05, 2019

Abstract

The Mediterranean diet is considered as a paradigm among the world's diets. It embraces healthy food and alternative agriculture, but is also a linkage between health and welfare of consumers, environmental practices and cultural customs. This sustainable food model is the one that combines in a hypothetical equation multidirectional interaction of interdependent variables (e.g. ecological, economical, cultural, social and nutritional), placing food at the heart of the concept of sustainable development.

Keywords: Mediterranean Diet; Food; Lifestyle; Sustainability

The Mediterranean diet is part of a dietary standard, which the World Health Organization recognizes as high quality, but it is fundamentally a lifestyle based on the ancestral culture of the Mediterranean people, and recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity since December 2013, as a result of an application submitted by Cyprus, Croatia, Spain, Greece, Italy, Morocco and Portugal. This recognition represents an undertaking to work to safeguard this legacy.

The Mediterranean diet, by its associated values, supports a healthy diet and lifestyle with significant results in promoting health, against disease such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer and neurodegenerative diseases and lower incidence of cardiovascular diseases, scientifically confirmed by several studies [1-3]. Indeed, the dietary patterns that prevail in this diet have many common characteristics. Olive oil occupies the central position of the culinary, in particular the use of extra virgin oil. Olive oil is a fat obtained from the fruit of the *Olea europaea* (olive tree), a traditional tree crop of the Mediterranean region. Whole olives are pressed to produce this distinctive oil but they are also consumed both as a snack and an ingredient in salads, sandwiches and stews. Olives are low in cholesterol and a good source of dietary fiber, which the body needs for good gut health. They are also rich in iron and copper and they have a chewy texture and a rich salty taste which makes them very pleasurable. Olive oil is important because of its high content of oleic acid and antioxidants that makes it suitable as nutrients and healthy products but it is also associated with the consumption of large quantities of vegetables in the form of salads and in preparing cooked foods. Other essential components of the Mediterranean diet are cereals, preferably as whole grain, grain legumes like beans or chickpeas, which guarantee the ingestion of vegetable proteins with high nutritional value and also nuts, considered a high-calorie food, they are powerhouses antioxidant, all of them should be consumed in high amount and frequency. This pattern also includes moderate consumption of milk and dairy products, mainly yogurt and cheese, white meat and eggs. Also, fish should be consumed, especially the bluefish that guarantees an adequate intake of polyunsaturated fat acids and shellfish [4]. On the contrary, consumption of red meat, processed meats, and foods rich in sugars and saturated fats should be small in both quantity