

The Mediterranean diet as a sustainable dietetic model

Giuseppe Grosso

G Grosso

University Hospital Policlinico Vittorio Emanuele, Catania, Italy
Contact: giuseppe.grosso@studium.unict.it

Recent global reports have shown the crucial role of diet on human health and prevention of non-communicable diseases. However, growing evidence shows that dietary choices also affect (and are affected by) society and environment. Sustainability and food security are closely interrelated and major effects in public health nutrition studies are made to quantify, assess determinants and establish interventions related to such outcomes. The Mediterranean dietary pattern has been recognized over the last decade as a healthier dietary pattern with a lower environmental impact. A multidimensional framework of key sustainable benefits of the Mediterranean diet has been highlighted, including (i) major health and nutrition benefits; (ii) low environmental impacts and richness in biodiversity; (iii) high sociocultural food values; and (iv) positive local economic returns. The lower environmental impact of the Mediterranean diet depends on low consumption of animal products and small water footprint and lower greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, historically the Mediterranean basin has been characterized by a unique biodiversity, an area featuring exceptional concentrations of endemic species leading to the use of local crops of cereals, fruits and vegetables, both wild and cultivated. Another crucial point is consumer choice, which can play an independent role in production and sustainability by increasing the demand for certain types of products according to their geographic origin (ideally local) and production process (ideally sustainable).