



Mediterranean diet is part of sustainable development, says FAO

The promotion of the Mediterranean and other traditional diets from around the world is important for advancing efforts towards a food system that respects the environment, culture and well-being of people, which is a fundamental element of sustainable development.

This was the main message at a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) event in Rome at the end of November. Organized in cooperation with the Government of Italy, the aim is to raise awareness of how these diets can help achieve progress towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

At the event, FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu said in his opening remarks that promoting and protecting healthy diets and making them available, accessible and affordable is critical for having a fulfilled and happy life. He went on to cite good models of traditional healthy diets that "contain the wisdom of our ancestors and the cultural essence of generations".

One of the examples was the Mediterranean diet, which includes vegetables, nuts, fish and extra virgin olive oil, and is recognized for its numerous health benefits, thanks in part to the nutrient oleic acid. Italian varieties of extra virgin olive oil are said to contain the highest levels of this beneficial monosaturated fatty acid.

Qu, who became the first Chinese to head the FAO Director-General earlier in the year, warned that despite the numerous benefits of these diets they are often neglected due to a combination of factors, such as population growth, globalization, urbanization, economic pressures and the fast pace of life which are driving change in our diets and consumption patterns.

He went on to encourage everybody, particularly the young generation, to re-discover enjoyment of cooking healthy meals at home as opposed to opting for fast-food meals. Research published this year found that unhealthy diets are now responsible for 11 million preventable deaths globally per year, making it the world's number one cause of death and disability.

Traditional and indigenous healthy diets play an important role in eliminating hunger and malnutrition, which is why food systems most transform to become more nutritious and inclusive. "Transforming our food systems is essential in ensuring healthy eating patterns," Qu said, stressing the need to make sustainable healthy diets affordable to all, especially to the most vulnerable.

The international TAICHI project is spreading information about the health benefits of using extra virgin olive oil for cooking to Mainland China and Taiwan.

Co-funded by the EU and promoted by the two main consortia of Italian olive growers, Italia Olivicola and UNAPOL, the TAICHI project offers consumers all the information they need to understand olive oil through its website, various social media platforms and OurOliveOil APP – available in the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

Sources:

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1253018/>

To find out more about the TAICHI project, visit OurOliveOil.com



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