



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - New York



The Permanent Mission of the
Kingdom of Morocco to the
United Nations in New York

MEDITERRANEAN DIET

A Living Heritage, Unleashing One Health

November 22nd, 2024 - United Nations Headquarters in New York

4:00 pm Conference (CR8)

6:00 pm Mediterranean Buffet (Sputnik Place)

The Permanent Missions of the Italy and Morocco jointly organize, on November 22nd, this Event which, aims to promote the Mediterranean Diet as the most sustainable diet and lifestyle for both human and planetary health.

There is scientific evidence acknowledging that the Mediterranean Diet is one of the most important diets and lifestyles for people and for planetary health. This is especially relevant in the current "Decade of Action" as outlined by the United Nations, specifically for urban areas, where the population is growing exponentially.

Thanks to the joint work by Italy and Morocco, together with Greece and Spain, UNESCO acknowledged the Mediterranean diet as an intangible cultural heritage in 2010, with the list of countries being expanded in 2013 to include Cyprus, Croatia and Portugal.

The Mediterranean Diet is "much more than a simple list of foods. It promotes social interaction, since the common meal is the basis of social customs and festivities shared by a given community, and has given rise to a remarkable body of knowledge, songs, maxims, tales, and legends. The Diet is founded on respect for the land and biodiversity, and ensures the preservation and development of traditional activities and crafts related to fishing and agriculture in Mediterranean communities."

Since this recognition, Italy, thanks to the Municipality of Pollica as the institutional representative of the recognized Emblematic Community, has been the activator, the catalyst, and the promoter of what is now an international network universally recognized; taking charge of many initiatives essential for the dissemination and preservation of the common heritage, including supporting the realization of the new joint site of the emblematic communities, organizing the protagonism of the "Mediterranean Diet" heritage at Expo 2015, and ensuring the participation of representatives from all the communities. Future Food Institute, focused on food innovation and on its cultural, economic, environmental, diplomatic, and social impact, is the official technical secretariat of the Municipality of Pollica and of the Mediterranean Diet Study Center 'Angelo Vassallo,' and the focal point of the network with the Emblematic Communities.

Traveling to Morocco, Chefchaouen was chosen as an emblematic community of the Mediterranean Diet thanks to its traditions and symbols passed down from generation to generation (food practices, social sharing and celebration) are still very much alive. This implies that local actors bring this heritage to life and must be the bearer of local development and allow the local population to live in accordance with their cultural identity. This cultural richness, supported by local actors, aims to promote local development in harmony with the cultural identity of the population

Chefchaouen's vision is based on the territory, authenticity, Mediterranean culture (nature, architecture, arts), "Bon Vivre," history and local resources (natural, human, textural and architectural). Culture thus occupies a prominent place in this vision through the components of the identity of the city. The Mediterranean Diet project integrates this vision and concretizes the central role of cultural policy, responding to the strategic policies of the Communal Development Plan.

In this context, the diffusion of the Mediterranean Lifestyle and the strengthening of relationships and exchanges between the communities representing the Mediterranean Diet are of crucial importance.

The Mediterranean Diet

Lifestyle and well-being

The "Food Systems," the true nexus of society, are facing a profound transformation and are looking for models capable of enabling the entire system, making it become a positive agent of regeneration. This is shown by the strategic plans of large multinational food companies that announce the transition to regenerative models and the achievement of carbon neutrality by 2050.

A concrete example of Integral Ecology, the Mediterranean Diet, as a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, represents a solid starting point for an Integral Ecological Regeneration that takes over from the Mediterranean, and becomes a strategic asset for the recovery and the restart of the humana comunitas.

In a perfect balance between humanistic and scientific cultures, the Mediterranean Lifestyle and Diet have contributed to the construction of an identity that has now gone well beyond the territorial or food borders. It has become a model for responding to the challenges inherent in the sustainable development objectives of the UN Agenda 2030 and the new European Farm to Fork strategy for the reduction of agri-food environmental impact. It is also establishing itself as a concrete tool for building an "informed food-tech future", that begins locally and develop globally, with education and future generations as a priority.

The cultural model of the Mediterranean Diet applies the principles of integral ecology, capable of implementing solutions that have at heart the health of the ecosystem, the community, and the individual, becoming the long-term strategy needed to realize the concept of "one health." The "Mediterranean Diet," in its most complete interpretation which also includes agricultural practices, seasonality, conviviality, and the cultural dimension, and in addition to the positive impacts it generates on human health and the ecosystem, is interpreted by us as the perfect model of integral ecological regeneration.

The awareness of how much the **Mediterranean Diet** is more than a simple food model, but a wealth of science, traditional knowledge, skills, and identity values generated by a territory, is consolidated in Cilento, Italy, which can be considered as a true laboratory of land and sea biodiversity, able to unleash a unique natural wealth. A cultural project that intersects multiple disciplines and has its roots in the sixth century BC.

The scientific and nutritional context

Since ancient times, scientific and medical skills gravitated in the area of Pollica, leading to the birth of the first modern western school of medicine, the Salerno Medical School (ninth century). But it was only after the war that the **American scientists Ancel Keys** (inventor of the "K ration") and **Margaret Haney**, moved to Pioppi, a village in the Cilento municipality of Pollica, and intrigued by the longevity of the local population, and studied the correlation between the local lifestyle and the epidemiological incidence of cardiovascular disease. The scientists codified the fundamental characteristics that are common to the traditional diets of the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea (from Spain to the Greek islands, passing through Southern Italy). A path that led to the discovery of the benefits of what, in the sixties, they defined for the first time as the "Mediterranean Diet."

Still today, the Mediterranean Diet is recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) for being a healthy and sustainable dietary pattern, reducing obesity and cardiovascular risk while promoting protection against depression, anxiety, and elderly cognitive decline.

"A set of ingredients, skills, knowledge, rituals, symbols, and traditions, ranging from the landscape to the table" outlines the close correlation between nutrition, health, and the environment. With the creation of the **Double Food Pyramid**, the different types of food of the Mediterranean Diet were compared with the impact of their production, to understand the very close connection between our food choices and the future of our planet.

One Health Approach

Human health and our shared environment are part of a deeply interconnected system. The WHO works closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) to promote multi-sectoral responses to food safety hazards, risks from zoonoses, and other public health threats at the human-animal-ecosystem interface and provide guidance on how to reduce these risks. As the population increases and the demand for food grows. With people and animals living closer together, the interdependence of human health and animal health, and the health of our shared environment health is without question. This is known as One Health.

Around 60% of all human infectious diseases are zoonotic, meaning they can be transferred between animals and humans. Healthy animals mean healthy people and a healthier planet. Protecting animal health helps protect against the transmission of animal-borne diseases and to protect an essential food source. Safe and sustainable food production is a key element of One Health. This is why Animal health Europe recommends a **One Health transition to sustainable food production under the EU Farm to Fork Strategy**. Healthy animals contribute both to safe food and our food security while minimizing impacts on the environment.

FAO promotes One Health in its work on food security, sustainable agriculture, food safety, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), nutrition, animal and plant health, fisheries, and livelihoods. Ensuring a **One Health approach is essential** for progress to anticipate, prevent, detect, and control diseases that spread between animals and humans, tackle AMR, ensure food safety, prevent environment-related human and animal health threats, as well as combatting many other challenges. The application of a One Health approach is critical for achieving the **UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and at large, the EU **Green Deal because everything is interconnected**.

In 2022, the Municipality of Pollica, the Mediterranean Diet Study Center "Angelo Vassallo," and the Future Food Institute, with the support of the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and with the participation of UNESCO representatives, together with the Permanent Mission of Morocco to the UN, organized an event at the UN Headquarters in New York to foster mutual actions to **strengthen Mediterranean alliances** and **promote "Mediterranean Diet" has a strategic asset for sustainable development**.

In this context, the Permanent Secretariat of the UNESCO Emblematic Communities of the Mediterranean Diet was established, with the goal of coordinating activities to preserve and promote this intangible heritage.

DRAFT PROGRAM

Moderator: Ms. **Sara Roversi**, President of Future Food Institute

16:00 - Opening Remarks

- **Mr. Maurizio Massari**: Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations
- **Mr. Omar Hilale** : Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations

16:08 – The work of the UN in leveraging the Mediterranean Diet for Nurturing Thriving and Resilient Communities

- **Mr. Maurizio Martina** - Deputy Secretary-General at FAO (remotely)
- **Mr. Eliot Minchenberg** - UNESCO New York Director and Representative to the UN

16:15 - The Cultural Dimension of the Mediterranean Diet as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

- **Mr. Pier Luigi Petrillo** - Full Professor of Comparative Cultural Heritage Law, President of the World Experts Board of the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage

16:20 - The Mediterranean Diet as a Blueprint for Sustainable Territorial Development

Examining the Mediterranean Diet as a model for integrating environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

- **Mr. Stefano Pisani** - Mayor of Pollica
- **Mr. Mohamed Chahboun Sefiani** - Mayor of Chefchaouen (remotely)

16:30 - Mediterranean Diet as a tool for Systemic Design for Landscape, Culture, and Social Development

Exploring integrated approaches to preserve cultural heritage while fostering sustainable landscape management and community well-being.

- **Ms. Elisabetta Moro** – Director of the MedEatResearch and Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa of Naples

16:38 - The Role of Food Studies and Culinary Education in Preserving Cultural Heritage

Exploring the power of culinary education in safeguarding and transmitting cultural heritage.

- **Board Member** - the Culinary Institute Of America
- **Ms. Lisa Sasson** - Associate Dean for Global Affairs and Experiential Learning NYU

16:50 - The Mediterranean Diet: Decoding the Algorithm of Longevity

Investigating scientific and cultural insights into how the Mediterranean Diet promotes long life and health.

- **Mr. Pinchas Cohen, MD** - Distinguished Professor of Gerontology, Medicine and Biological Sciences - Dean, USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology - William and Sylvia Kugel Dean's Chair in Gerontology - Executive Director, Ethel Percy Andrus Gerontology Center (remotely)
- **Mr. Alessio Fasano** - Professor of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School and Professor of Nutrition, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health - Chief of the Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition, Massachusetts General Hospital
- **Mr. Danilo Ercolini** - Director of the Department of Agricultura Sciences - University of Naples Federico II. 2015 - Full Professor of Microbiology
- **Mr. Roberto Vicinanza** - Physician, Geriatrician, Researcher, and Associate Professor of Gerontology at the University of Southern California

17:40 - Passing Down the Legacy: Engaging Youth and Climate Activists in Sustainable Lifestyles

Exploring how youth climate activists can help transmit the values of the Mediterranean Diet for sustainable living.

- **Barbascura** - Influencer/Climate Activist
- **The voice of youth:** Students from The Masters School of New York and Paideia Campus

17:50 - Closing Remarks by the Permanent Representative of Italy and Morocco: Announcement that a draft UN Resolution to establish the World Mediterranean Diet Day will be presented in 2025 for the adoption by the UN General Assembly

17:55 - End of the event. Guests and participants transfer to Sputnik Place at the first floor.

18:00 - Convivium: a Mediterranean Buffet (Sputnik Place, first floor).

- **Inspired by the Cilento tradition, featuring a selection of exceptional producers.** The new wine from the Mediterranean Diet Vineyard will be premiered, alongside Slow Food Presidia from Cilento, a selection of the finest extra virgin olive oils curated by "BIOLIVITALY," and pasta producers. A true feast, offering an opportunity to savor conviviality and a deep connection with the land.
- **Experience:** A real food experience showcasing traditional Mediterranean dishes prepared with sustainable, local ingredients: "An authentic culinary experience where participants can discover traditional Mediterranean Diet dishes, prepared with local and sustainable ingredients. A journey that highlights the nutritional, cultural, and environmental benefits of each recipe, offering an immersive taste of the flavors and knowledge of an ancient tradition."
- **Food experience** with iconic producers from the lands of the Mediterranean diet: "A unique culinary experience alongside iconic producers from the lands of the Mediterranean Diet. Discover the secrets behind the most representative products and embark on a journey through the authentic flavors that tell the story and biodiversity of the Mediterranean."

Themes and Highlights:

1. Living Heritage and Cultural Preservation:

- **Mediterranean Diet as a Living Heritage:** Recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, the Mediterranean Diet is a living example of how traditional knowledge and practices can be preserved and adapted to modern contexts.
- **Cultural Exchange:** The event will foster cultural exchange, showcasing the rich traditions and practices associated with the Mediterranean Diet, including food, music, dance, and crafts.

2. Integral Ecology:

- **Holistic Approach:** Integral ecology encompasses environmental, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. The Mediterranean Diet, with its emphasis on sustainability, health, and community, serves as a model for this holistic approach.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Focus on sustainable agricultural practices, biodiversity conservation, and reducing carbon footprints through dietary choices.
- **Social Well-being:** Promoting social cohesion and community well-being through shared culinary traditions and healthy eating practices.

3. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- **Health and Well-being (SDG 3):** Enhancing public health by reducing the prevalence of non-communicable diseases through healthy dietary practices.

- **Quality Education (SDG 4):** Providing educational programs that teach the values and practices of the Mediterranean Diet to diverse audiences.
- **Gender Equality (SDG 5):** Empowering women through culinary traditions and promoting their roles in food systems.
- **Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8):** Supporting local economies through sustainable agriculture and tourism related to the Mediterranean Diet.
- **Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11):** Promoting sustainable urban food systems and community resilience.
- **Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12):** Encouraging sustainable food systems and reducing food waste.
- **Climate Action (SDG 13):** Mitigating climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with food production and consumption.
- **Life on Land (SDG 15):** Protecting terrestrial ecosystems through sustainable farming practices.
- **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG 16):** Promoting inclusive and peaceful communities through shared culinary heritage.
- **Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17):** Building strong international collaborations to promote and preserve the Mediterranean Diet.

4. Educational Initiatives:

- **Engaging Schools and Communities:** Programs aimed at teaching the principles of the Mediterranean Diet to children and communities, fostering a new generation of informed and healthy individuals.
- **Hands-on Learning:** Interactive workshops, cooking classes, and educational tours to immerse participants in the practices and values of the Mediterranean Diet.

5. Policy and Advocacy:

- **Policy Integration:** Developing and advocating for policies that support the Mediterranean Diet as part of national and international health and sustainability agendas.
- **Community Empowerment:** Empowering local communities to take ownership of their food systems and heritage, ensuring the continued relevance and vitality of the Mediterranean Diet.

Expected Outcomes:

- **Increased Awareness:** Raise global awareness of the Mediterranean Diet's health, environmental, and cultural benefits.
- **Strengthened Cooperation:** Foster international collaboration to promote and preserve the Mediterranean Diet.
- **Policy Recommendations:** Develop actionable strategies to integrate the Mediterranean Diet into public health and sustainability policies.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Enhance cultural understanding and appreciation of Mediterranean heritage.
- **Educational Impact:** Expand educational programs that teach the values and practices of the Mediterranean Diet to diverse audiences.

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