The MedDiet Project Begins a Second Phase of Activities After a Successful First Year

The project “Mediterranean Diet and Enhancement of Traditional Foodstuff - MedDiet” is a strategic project funded by European Union in the framework of the ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme (http://www.enpicbcmed.eu). The ENPI CBC Med Programme aims at reinforcing cooperation between the European Union and partner countries regions placed along the shores of the Mediterranean.

By the cooperation of 13 partners of 6 different countries (Egypt, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Spain and Tunisia), MedDiet aims to increase the awareness on the values and the philosophy of the Mediterranean Diet as well as its deeply link with the traditional foodstuff.

The MedDiet project begins the second phase of actions in the countries of Egypt, Spain, Greece, Italy, Lebanon and Tunisia, after a first phase of activities full of successes.

At this moment, over 112.000 consumers in different municipalities of the participating countries and 5.300 Primary and Secondary school students have benefited of these activities. Also, there have been distributed over 1.000 training packages and tutorials among teachers, school directors and officers of local authorities; and 1.820 didactical materials and workbooks have been delivered to children. Moreover, about 50.000 promotional and communicational gadgets have been provided, such as brochures, leaflets, tasting kits, guides, displays and all kind of utensils for the promotion of the Mediterranean Diet, its local products and the practice of healthy habits and physical activity.

The most relevant result of this action is, of sure, that some schools have decided to change menu of the school canteen according to the Mediterranean Diet principles. During next months the MedDiet team will continue to monitor schools involved in the project with the hope to insert in the school program some of the nutritional educational initiatives.

If you want to discover more information about this activities click on the following link http://www.med-diet.eu, which already has more than 520 users per month. Furthermore, with the main goal of transmitting to schools and municipalities the designed knowledge, 1.315 Guides have been distributed to teachers, school directors and officers of local authorities, composed by an extensive theoretical basis and a number of practical activities to implement among pupils and consumers. Among the most relevant, there have been tasting workshops, farm and factory visits, competitions on Mediterranean Diet cuisine, school canteen check-ups and school vegetable gardens. Moreover, about 50.000 promotional and communicational gadgets have been provided, such as brochures, leaflets, tasting kits, guides, displays and all kind of utensils for the promotion of the Mediterranean Diet, its local products and the practice of healthy habits and physical activity.

If you want to discover more information about this activities click on the following link http://www.med-diet.eu, which already has more than 520 users per month. Furthermore, with the main goal of transmitting to schools and municipalities the designed knowledge, 1.315 Guides have been distributed to teachers, school directors and officers of local authorities, composed by an extensive theoretical basis and a number of practical activities to implement among pupils and consumers. Among the most relevant, there have been tasting workshops, farm and factory visits, competitions on Mediterranean Diet cuisine, school canteen check-ups and school vegetable gardens.

MedDiet Quality Label for restaurants: a new way to promote Mediterranean Diet values

The traditional Mediterranean Diet is the heritage resulting from millennia of exchanges within the Mediterranean basin region that has defined and characterized the eating habits of the countries in those regions until the mid twentieth century. It is not a homogeneous model throughout the Mediterranean as it has regional variations, the common features of the Mediterranean Diet is the abundance of plant-based foods such as cereals (in the form of bread, pasta, couscous, rice), vegetables, legumes, fruits, nuts and seeds, the use of olive oil as the main source of fat, a moderate consumption of fish, shellfish, poultry, eggs, and dairy products (fermented milk products like yoghurt, kefir and cheese), a consumption of small amounts of red meat and in the case of adults a moderate daily intake of wine (in permitting cultures).

Thus, the MedDiet project aims to raise the awareness of consumers about the importance of preserving healthy food traditions potentially enhancing not only health but also environmental sustainability, and moreover, the Mediterranean economy and cultural heritage. Restaurants are one of the main beneficiaries of the project. In fact, the private sector needs to be encouraged in promoting and safeguarding the authentic Mediterranean Diet.

MedDiet project supports restaurants interested to offer and promote the authentic MD through the adoption of a MedDiet Quality Label, in the form of a collective trademark. By this way, restaurants will see their efforts recognized and their visibility in the market increased.

The collective trademark “MedDiet” guarantees the following items:

1. selection of local products;
2. dishes made with traditional recipes and / or in line with the Mediterranean Diet;
3. customer focus;
4. sharing information and awareness on the Mediterranean Diet.

To this purpose, a Technical Committee composed by 6 members, one per each MedDiet country (Spain, Italy, Greece, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon), has established:

- the regulation of the certification system, where rules for auditing and certification are defined and all necessary application instruments are conceive;
- a shared MedDiet Quality standard, containing the specifications that restaurants should respect to obtain the Label;
- the logo and coordinated image of the Label.
Common schemes are established between partners and then the system is adapted to each national context of the project. A “training for trainers” activity was implemented to establish a team of trainers (3 officers for each country belonging to project partners) to acquire knowledge and competences concerning how to promote and apply the MedDiet Quality Label among restaurants. A Regulation and Guidelines for the implementation of MedDiet Quality Label in restaurants are conceived to support restaurant owners and managers to cope with the label. MedDiet, therefore, supports those restaurants interested in offering and promoting the authentic Mediterranean Diet, increasing their market visibility and involving at least 300 of them in pilot projects geared towards:

- training on the requirements for the obtaining of the Label
- technical assistance finalised to the achievement of the Label
- promotion at local, regional and Euro-Mediterranean level of the MedDiet Quality Label, entering in the network of the MedDiet restaurants

As regards Italian context, a first call for manifesting interest targeted to the restaurants based in Sardinia has been launched. For more information (in Italian language) please visit http://www.csimprese.it/P42A513C16S12/Progetto-MedDiet—Selezione-dei-ristoranti-per-l-ottenimento-del-Marchio-di-qualita-MedDiet.htm

Please stay tuned on http://www.med-diet.eu for further updates and news!

Exchange of experiences: high representatives of Ministries and Research Centers of Southern Mediterranean Countries visit Greece, Italy and Spain

In the framework of Work Package 6 “The Institutional Capacity building for safeguarding the Mediterranean” three study visits are being organized by the partners CEEBA (Confederation of Egyptian European Business Associations) and ANCO (Italian Olive Oil Towns Association) in order to exchange experience about policies, measures and initiative by European national, regional and local authorities with country partners Greece, Italy and Spain.

The aim of this task is to improve the capacity of policy making institutions of Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia in development policies and instruments aimed at safeguarding the Mediterranean Diet. Therefor the study visits were focused on different practices to protect and safeguard of MedDiet products and food and the promotion of MedDiet nutrition education.

During the first Study Visit in Greece (from June 15th until June 20th 2014) the 27 representative of public institutions had the chance to visit small and medium sized companies which are specialized in the production of traditional agro-food. Most of them are in the dairy or the olive oil production sector engaged, which are typical products of the region. Within the five day program the participants had also the chance to visit the “Technological Education Institute (TEI) of Peloponnese” research institute, which is supporting the local companies to improve the qualities of their products.

On the last visit the group had the chance to discuss the outcomes and the benefits of the trip during workshops and the conference. The Study Visit was finished with a cooking contest where all participants named the best cooked traditional dishes.

A week study-visit was held in Rome from 8th to 11th September at the offices of the MIPAAF, Unioncamere and the Ministry of Education. 30 representatives of the national authorities of Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia have participated in meetings and conferences on the following topics: protection and preservation of products and dishes of the Mediterranean Diet, the protection of designations of origin (PDO, PGI and TSG) and traditional products, promotion and nutrition education on the Mediterranean Diet, best practices and quality standards with reference to the Mediterranean lifestyle, traceability and labeling. Very important moments of the study trip in Italy were also visits to the excellence companies which permitted to closely observe the productive processes of some traditional products.

Spain was the Country that has closed the cycle of study-visits. Between the September 28th and the October 2nd 34 representatives of ministries and research centers, Business experts and teachers from Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia took part to training courses, lectures, lab visits, conference on different topics: Food quality certification, the process of Designation of origin in Spain, Olive Oil Tasting, Quality systems in wine production, tourism regarding Mediterranean Diet and Agro Food Industry.

Following from this intensive experiences, by the end of the year, Med Countries Partners will realize a proposal on a shared legal framework for the safeguard of Mediterranean Diet and traditional products at national level (Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon) and at Euro-Med level. It will be a real tentative to introduce policies and instruments aimed at safeguarding the Mediterranean Diet.

Please stay tuned on http://www.med-diet.eu for further updates and news!

MEDDIET International Capitalization Meeting (Corfù, 11.06.2014)

This year, in the whole context of the AIC Forum XIV Annual Edition (held in Corfù from 10th to 12th of June), the Workgroup on Agriculture has been characterized by a specific in-depth analysis about one of potentially main issues of the forthcoming Adriatic Ionian Macroregion: the Mediterranean diet.

Thanks to the project MedDiet – Mediterranean Diet And Enhancement Of Traditional Foodstuff coordinated by Unioncamere (the Italian National Association of Chambers of Commerce), the Mediterranean diet topic was deeply discussed among numerous participants from the Project Partnership bodies and the Mediterranean diet experts called for this occasion from the Adriatic and Ionian Countries (in particular there were participants from Italy, Greece, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania).
The Mediterranean Diet shares Expo’s topics as it identifies with the same values. In fact, the Mediterranean Diet is a model for the development of all those economies that take great care over man’s health and that identify the basis on which it is possible to found an actual lifestyle in the culture of food and in a correct dietary education. In a context such as Expo’s, the Mediterranean Diet not only finds a useful showcase through which it can project (divulgate, promote) the most deep-rooted flavours and meanings of its dietary tradition and culture, but also a space in which it can express its decisive contribution in answering the many questions on nutrition in the world. Therefore, through the values of a correct dietary education, it offers a model on which to build an intelligent, inclusive and sustainable growth of a quality agriculture.

The Mediterranean Diet as an expression of traditions and values

The meaning of the Mediterranean Diet cannot be contained in a definition. There is no terminological synthesis that can encompass the world of values concealed within this articulated dietary philosophy. In fact, the Mediterranean Diet is not only a matter of products and nutritional values: rather, it is a millenary history, a story of cultural meanings developed through the interaction between the various populations of the Mediterranean area and their territories. Therefore, the Mediterranean Diet is the result of a stratified knowledge of dietary traditions, the establishment of experiences based on the peculiarities of a territory and its biodiversity. To extract the Mediterranean Diet from its history and traditions means to leave out the most relevant part of its values: that is, cultural identity.

From a historical viewpoint, the origins of the Mediterranean Diet are lost in antiquity. They are rooted in the dietary habits of ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, in a perfect balance between available resources and nutritional needs. As the centuries passed, the Mediterranean Diet evolved and was enriched with the dietary traditions of the many people that alternated on the shores of the Mediterranean, resulting in a synthesis of values unique worldwide. Values that today are expressed in products, gastronomies, cooking techniques, seasonings and ways of eating meals that, even if in the frame of a multiplicity of typical and local expressions, have the characteristic of referring to a patrimony of common dietary resources which compose the diet pyramid.

This is the written story: the one which is more evident.

Then, there is the non-written story, suspended and intangible, that passes from the territory to our tables and expresses ancient traditions and values handed down orally, from generation to generation. A patrimony of abilities, knowledge, customs and traditions typical of a culture based on conviviality, and that through conviviality renews itself as the expression of a symbiotic and continuous dialogue with the territory. In the centre of this world, there is the woman: living memory and instrument of this deep knowledge, authentic custodian of our cultural identity. We have to acknowledge that the transmission and protection of knowledge, techniques, rituals and traditional gestures are in good part the woman’s merit, who also has an essential role in regulating food consumption wisely based on seasonal products. They are rooted in the dietary habits of ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, in a perfect balance between available resources and nutritional needs. As the centuries passed, the Mediterranean Diet evolved and was enriched with the dietary traditions of the many people that alternated on the shores of the Mediterranean, resulting in a synthesis of values unique worldwide. Values that today are expressed in products, gastronomies, cooking techniques, seasonings and ways of eating meals that, even if in the frame of a multiplicity of typical and local expressions, have the characteristic of referring to a patrimony of common dietary resources which compose the diet pyramid.

To enhance the Mediterranean Diet means to exalt all of its historical components, to recompose the frame of the multiple territorial experiences in a perspective of cultural enhancement, recalling all those influences and contaminations that contributed in forming our diet patrimony. It also means, though, to enhance the way-too-often omitted role of hospitality, conviviality, togetherness at the dinner table, exalting the traditional foundations of what today is a consolidated and universal lifestyle.

If there is a model in the world capable of answering Expo’s invitation on the topic of enhancement of dietary traditions, example and patrimony of universal values, that is the Mediterranean Diet.
Disclaimer
This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union under the ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of Unioncamere and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union or of the Programme's management structures.

Statement about the Programme
The 2007-2013 ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme is a multilateral Cross-Border Cooperation initiative funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The Programme objective is to promote the sustainable and harmonious cooperation process at the Mediterranean Basin level by dealing with the common challenges and enhancing its endogenous potential. It finances cooperation projects as a contribution to the economic, social, environmental and cultural development of the Mediterranean region. The following 14 countries participate in the Programme: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestinian Authority, Portugal, Spain, Syria, Tunisia. The Joint Managing Authority (JMA) is the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Italy). Official Programme languages are Arabic, English and French.

General statement on the European Union
The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

The MedDiet Project
The project “Mediterranean diet and enhancement of traditional foodstuff - MedDiet” is implemented under the ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme (www.enpicbcmmed.eu). Its total budget is 4,99 million Euro and it is financed, for an amount of 4,49 million Euro, by the European Union through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. The ENPI CBC Med Programme aims at reinforcing cooperation between the European Union and partner countries regions placed along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.