Better nutrition for the Balkans

A study of consumers’ food habits in the Balkans has led to new protocols, networks and knowledge to help improve health and nutrition.

Understanding the attitudes, knowledge and behaviour of food consumers is vital for improving health, nutrition and food safety. Therefore, an EU-funded initiative in the Balkan region advanced food consumer science and improved policymaking with regard to food consumption.

The goal of the project FOCUS-BALKANS (Food consumer science in the Balkans: Frameworks, protocols and networks for a better knowledge of food behaviours) was to strengthen research capacity in the field in the Western Balkan Countries (WBCs). This involved working together with public organisations, the private sector and NGOs.

Project partners developed a network of universities, institutions, high schools, NGOs and private businesses to improve understanding of food consumers. The focus was on promoting healthy and nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables, as well as encouraging sustainability through the increased use of organic and traditional food products.

The consortium conducted networking meetings in almost all WBCs. It initiated consumer studies and interviews related to fruits and products with health claims, collecting data on nutrition, consumption and production. It also evaluated the supply chain of organic products per country, and investigated consumer attitudes and expectations towards traditional food.

Supported by in-depth consumer surveys, case studies and focus groups, the project published a report on the production and consumption of fruits and fruit products in the Balkans. It also produced a report on consumer motivations and behaviours for products that claim nutritional benefits.

FOCUS-BALKANS provided a better understanding about what drives consumer behaviour and market trends, and identified variations between food consumer groups within the population. With the aid of new methods and tools in food consumer science specifically adapted to the region, policymakers will be able to formulate better policies to promote health and well-being and to combat diet-related disorders.

Related information

| Report Summary | Final Report Summary - FOCUS-BALKANS (Food Consumer Science in the Balkans: Frameworks, Protocols and Networks for a better knowledge of food behaviours) |