



Abstract

Aim: SWITCHtoHEALTHY project aims to generate a dietary behaviour change by demonstrating and reinforcing the role of the family in promoting a sustainable change towards enhancing the adherence to the Mediterranean dietary pattern of the family members (adults, adolescents, and children).

Method: A multi-centric intervention with 360 families will be performed in 3 Mediterranean countries (Spain, Morocco and Turkey). Dietary behaviour change will be fostered by making available to families a combination of hands-on educational material and digital tools and complementing the dietary and lifestyle recommendations with easy-to-eat healthier snacking products. In this approach, whereas digital interactive tools (SWITCHtoHEALTHY App) will be used by the parents to support them in preparing weekly healthier dietary plans for the main meals for them and their children, the educational material will be used to support families in acquiring healthier habits and to educate children and adolescents about the benefits of Mediterranean Diet (MD). Finally, healthy, and nutritious plant-based snacks will be introduced in the children dietary plan to complement it and to substitute less healthier options in-between meals.

Results: SWITCHtoHEALTHY will result in increasing the adherence to MD by taking an intra-familial systemic approach taking the family context into account and assessing mutual influence of children/adolescents-parents and their roles in healthy eating and lifestyle; developing innovative products (plant-based snacks) based on proximity of ingredients, sustainability and healthy properties to support agri-food producers (especially SMEs) in finding new business opportunities; supporting food companies in getting through the barriers to market uptake and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage by designing innovative consumer-oriented business models; raising awareness of the healthy benefits derived from a high adherence to a MD, increasing knowledge on local Mediterranean products, thus contributing to drive healthy food choices among families; and synergising cross-sectorial policy coherence across agriculture, health, education, environment, trade, etc. from local to national and international level and discussing with all actors of society.

Conclusions: Profound dietary changes are occurring across Mediterranean countries, largely due to cultural and socio-economic- driven lifestyle changes, that are leading to the erosion of Mediterranean food cultures. The SWITCHtoHEALTHY project pretend to achieve a switch to MD pattern to contribute to reduce the prevalence of overweight and obesity among families and provide tools for policy makers to promote adherence to MD.

