



Eat Better, Live Better

EVENT REPORT

Tuesday 11 June

16:30-18:00 (CET, online)

Organised by

Portuguese Diabetes Association (APDP)

French Diabetes Federation (FFD)

International Diabetes Federation Europe (IDF Europe)

Supported by **Healthy Food, Healthy Planet Alliance (HFHP)**



- Rogerio Ribeiro, Lead Researcher at the Portuguese Diabetes Association (APDP)
- Marie-Laure Mourre, Senior Lecturer at University Paris-Créteil
- Claire Chambrier, Head Scientist at the Agency for Research and Information on Fruits and Vegetables (Aprifel)
- Marie-Laure Lumediluna, Chair of AFD 13-83 France and person living with type 2 diabetes
- Sofia Rodrigues, healthcare professional on behalf of APDP
- Rafael Pinto, Policy Manager at the European Vegetarian Union
- Elisabeth Dupont, Regional Manager at IDF Europe

Moderated by Jessica Nastos (IDF Europe)

Introduction

With the support of the Healthy Food Healthy Planet Alliance, the International Diabetes Federation Europe (IDF Europe), the French Diabetes Federation (FFD) and the Portuguese Diabetes Association (APDP) have been collaborating on an 18-month initiative named “Eat Better, Live Better”. This initiative aims to explore and promote the role of plant-based diets in the prevention and management of diabetes. Following the meeting held in the EU Parliament on April 18, this webinar presented the final results of the project and provided the opportunity to hear the perspectives of various stakeholders, including researchers, healthcare professionals, public health experts and people living with diabetes (PwD) on the benefits of shifting towards plant-based diets and on ways to support sustainable behavioral change, both for PwD and the general population.



**Eat ,
Live Better**

Webinar on Tuesday 11 June, from 16:30 to 18:00

Organised by

International Diabetes Federation Europe (IDF Europe)
Portuguese Diabetes Association (APDP)
French Diabetes Federation (FFD)

Supported by 

Results of the project “Eat Better, Live Better” and perspectives for the diabetes community

Rogério Ribeiro

Rogério Ribeiro opened the webinar with an overview of the "Eat Better, Live Better" project, tracing its journey from conception to final results. He highlighted the growing prevalence of diabetes and its burden on individuals, healthcare systems, and society. Inadequate health habits and dietary patterns are significant contributors to the rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes. Rogério stressed the importance of healthy diets, particularly plant-based, in preventing and managing diabetes, and discussed the daily complexities faced by people living with diabetes (PWD) in managing their condition.

The “Eat Better, Live Better” project aims to establish the role of plant-based diets in managing type 2 Diabetes (T2D) through several steps: a literature review, a social marketing survey and food workshops. The project also emphasises the importance of integrating territory-specific diets and focuses on nutrition education to offer pragmatic solutions to Europeans. One goal was also to analyse the perception and implementation challenges of these diets. Rogério emphasised that, in order to effectively increase and support the dietary shift toward plant-based diets, it is crucial to bring together both healthcare professionals (HCPs) and people living with diabetes (PWD).

As a food literacy intervention, the “Eat Better Live Better” initiative aims to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice and contribute to the transition to a greater inclusion of plant-based food in PwD’s life in a healthy, safe and sustainable way, by bringing together HCPs and PwD.



Step 1: Literature Review - Project partners reviewed numerous studies showing the benefits of plant-based diets in preventing diabetes complications and promoting overall health. However, they also identified limitations in the existing literature, such as inconsistent definitions of plant-based diets, disparate methodologies, and limited sample sizes.

Step 2: Social Marketing Survey - Based on the literature review, a social marketing questionnaire was developed in Portugal and France to identify diet patterns of people living with type 2 diabetes and assess their perceptions of plant-based diets. This approach helped identify target groups for tailored interventions. The survey results indicated that most participants were familiar with Mediterranean diets. The questionnaire also permitted to identify potential targeted groups for tailored interventions.





Step 3: Transforming Pragmatic Approach into Food Workshops - The project adopted a pragmatic approach to provide practical support and understanding for implementing plant-based dietary shifts. Several food workshops were conducted in Portugal and France, with HCPs and PWD..

This project has been supported by the Healthy Food, Healthy Planet Alliance, a pan-European movement that brings together stakeholders from various fields including health, climate change, biodiversity, and animal welfare. The alliance aims to transform our food system into a healthier and more sustainable model.

Rogério concluded by emphasizing the need to give more thought to territorial diets and to the behavioral and cultural factors. He also highlighted the necessity to foster the role of patient associations, engage HCPs, and create alliances with the distribution industry to influence consumption perceptions. Additionally, he emphasised the importance of adapting educational materials and making them available to the community to increase nutritional education for all.

The role of social marketing approach in the project

Marie-Laure Mourre

Marie-Laure Mourre, associate professor in Management Science at the University Paris-Créteil, presented the social marketing survey performed during the project. Marie-Laure Mourre provided her expertise in behavioral sciences and social marketing to develop the project survey that was shared with PWD living in both countries. The survey, composed of 121 questions, aimed to identify motivational levers to facilitate change in eating behavior among PWD. Social marketing, which applies traditional marketing principles to promote social good, has proven effective in facilitating behavior change by creating, communicating and delivering value to influence target audience behaviors. To segment respondents, the survey focused on variables such as attitude towards plant-based diets, intention to follow a more plant-based diet, or intention to reduce meat consumption. As a result, participants were classified into 3 clusters (undecided, enthusiastic, reluctant), based on their aptitude and willingness to shift toward a more plant-based diet. Based on this identification, project partners can now develop tailored interventions to support the adoption of plant-based diets, adapted to the unique needs and characteristics of participants in each cluster.

Marie-Laure Mourre also emphasised the crucial role of health literacy and patient empowerment in understanding nutritional benefits, making informed decisions, and adopting more plant-based diets in the long run. She concluded by highlighting the importance of a targeted approach in promoting dietary changes among PwD by understanding the distinct characteristics and needs of each cluster.

From theory to practice: changing dietary habits through plant-based culinary workshops

Lisandra Ribeiro

Lisandra Ribeiro, a nutritionist at APDP, gave an overview of the seven food workshops conducted in Portugal during the project. The food workshops convened 45 participants, including both PwD and HCPs, and aimed to encourage the adoption of plant-based diets by providing a concrete understanding of plant-based food in practice. These workshops also aimed to increase knowledge about plant-based diets and improve knowledge about the relationship between these diets, diabetes management and sustainability. Lisandra expressed that these workshops were also instrumental in fostering people's motivation to cook appealing and tasty plant-based meals.



In addition to being highly appreciated, the workshops led to dietary changes in nearly 81% of participants with diabetes. According to a post-workshop survey, these participants reported incorporating plant-based foods into their diets more frequently. Moreover, nearly 83% of HCPs agreed that, after the workshop, they more frequently guided PwD towards a plant-based diet or referred them to a nutritionist with this indication.

Lisandra concluded by recalling that healthy, plant-based diets (with the inclusion of whole grains, legumes, nuts, fruits, vegetables and minimal processed foods) represent a promising tool in diabetes risk prevention and management.

Collectively promoting a healthy and sustainable diet rich in fruits and vegetables

Claire Chambrier

Claire Chambrier, Head of Scientific and Educational Development for Aprifel, presented Aprifel's activities and their collaboration with FFD. Aprifel is the French agency for research and information on fruits and vegetables. They work for the translation of scientific data and on the promotion of evidence-based benefits of increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, engaging with the national and international scientific community.

Aprifel shares information with multiple audiences such as scientists and experts as well as health and education professionals and the general public. They aim to promote concrete, science-based recommendations to change practices and policies in favor of a healthy and sustainable diet, accessible to all. Aprifel and the FFD have collaborated on several initiatives to promote and encourage healthier diets for improved health outcomes, especially for PwD. These initiatives include specific publications and the organisation of culinary workshops, including those in the current project.

Testimonial and key take-away of the project (PwD)

Marie-Laure Lumediluna

Marie-Laure Lumediluna, PwD and chair of AFD 13-83 (a regional diabetes association part of FFD) provided her video testimonial as a PwD who adopted a plant-based diet. She expressed the benefits of a such dietary change on her mental and physical health and on her diabetes management.

Have you noticed any changes in the daily management of your diabetes?

Absolutely. Not only did I feel lighter due to the weight loss, but also in better physical and mental shape.



A plant-based diet not only aids in weight control due to its high fiber content and generally low-calorie density, but also helps manage blood pressure and improve lipid profiles. Stressing the benefits for overall health, she highlighted the importance of communication with healthcare professionals, dietitians, or nutritionists to sustain long-term dietary changes, especially for people with diabetes (PwD). She acknowledged existing obstacles for PwD transitioning to a plant-based diet, such as product costs. To address this issue, she advocated for prioritising short supply chains, local and seasonal products, and minimally processed frozen options.

Testimonial and key take-away of the project (HCP)

Sofia Rodrigues

Sofia Rodrigues shared her experience as a healthcare professional who attended the food workshop in Portugal and discussed its impact on her practice. She realised that her previous dietary recommendations were insufficient and has since incorporated the workshop lessons to enhance her guidance. She now advises her patients to replace meat proteins with vegetable proteins when convenient, avoid cooking with saturated fats, and substitute salt with aromatic herbs. She also emphasises the adaptability of territorial diets into plant-based alternatives. Highlighting the benefits of her personal shift to a plant-based diet, she provides better support to her patients and improves her recommendations on plant-based diets. Additionally, she stresses that fiber and vegetable protein are effective in lowering the glycaemic index and underscores the environmental benefits of such diets.

Reflecting the importance of plant-based diets for better health outcomes in the EU political and legislative sphere

Rafael Pinto

Rafael Pinto, EU Policy Manager at the European Vegetarian Union, focused his presentation on promoting plant-based diets through EU policy. He emphasised the EU's role in making sustainable and healthy food, such as plant-based products, accessible and affordable for all. Currently, Europeans consume about 60% of their protein from animal sources and 40% from plant-based sources, contrary to the global trend of 60% plant-based and 40% animal protein consumption. Rafael highlighted the need to make sustainable choices the most affordable and convenient options. He identified mechanisms like school schemes, promotion policy, and integrating health targets into food and agricultural policies as crucial for supporting dietary shifts. A survey by the European Vegetarian Union of over 60 political parties across Europe revealed strong support for a Common Agricultural Policy with a greater focus on health and environmental targets.

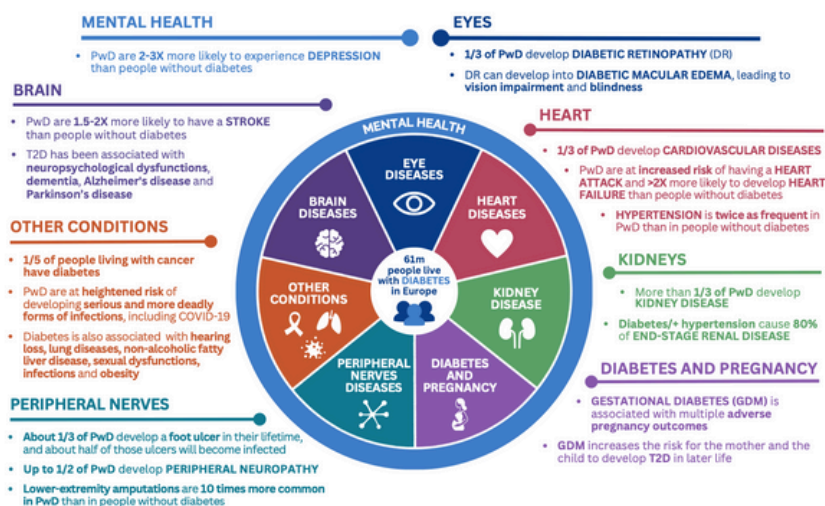
Moving forward to healthier diets across the region

Elisabeth Dupont

Elisabeth Dupont, Regional Manager at IDF Europe, emphasised the critical importance of the one health approach, as health cannot be addressed effectively in silos. She highlighted the interconnection between human health and planetary health, stressing the urgent need to act on both fronts. Despite significant scientific advances, the number of people with diabetes continues to rise, and their quality of life remains suboptimal.

COMPLICATIONS AND COMORBIDITIES IN PEOPLE LIVING WITH DIABETES (PWD)

Diabetes can affect every organ system in the human body. The extent of potential organ damage depends largely on its duration and successful management.



Elisabeth underscored the importance of understanding diabetes-related complications, as diabetes is a root cause of many life-threatening conditions and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular, kidney, and liver diseases. She also highlighted that the "Eat Better, Live Better" Project exemplifies the necessity of addressing both human health and environmental health simultaneously.

Q&A Session

Type 2 diabetes is often accompanied by other diseases such as kidney or liver disease. What are the benefits of a plant-based diet for individuals living with these comorbidities? Additionally, what role can healthcare providers play in encouraging these patients to adopt a plant-based diet?

Lisandra Ribeiro: A plant-based diet offers several benefits for individuals with type 2 diabetes and comorbidities such as kidney or liver disease. Plant-based diets have mechanisms that produce favorable effects, such as low energy density, which contributes to long-term weight loss and maintenance. High fiber content in plant-based foods aids in weight control and has cholesterol-lowering effects. Additionally, the abundant fiber helps in controlling blood sugar levels. Micronutrients present in plant-based diets can reduce blood pressure, enhance metabolism, and improve insulin sensitivity.

Rogério Ribeiro: Specialised professionals, like nutritionists, are rare to find in primary care in many countries. Consequently, there is a need for other healthcare professionals, such as general practitioners, to provide patients with more nutritional knowledge.

Is there any science that puts plant-based diets above meat-based diets?

Rogério Ribeiro: It has been demonstrated that processed meat has a very detrimental impact on health, particularly on diabetes risk and management. But while discussing plant-based diets, it's important to recognise that not all plant-based diets are equal in terms of health outcomes. The emphasis should be on healthy plant-based diets, focusing on whole grains and other nutritious plant-based foods.

Claire Chambrier: It is very important to have a balanced diet, adjusting portions, increasing the intake of fruits, vegetables, and fibers, and minimizing processed foods. It's also important to keep the pleasure of eating.

How can we enhance support for healthcare professionals in educating their patients about diets, especially given the importance of health literacy and nutritional knowledge?

Rogério Ribeiro: Understanding the barriers is crucial. Initially, healthcare professionals believed that people with diabetes lacked interest in dietary matters and perceived a knowledge deficit hindering discussions. In response to these challenges, an effective approach was to bridge this gap by enhancing knowledge and, importantly, fostering motivation. As Claire mentioned, emphasising the pleasure of food is essential. Often, the association between pleasure and quantity is misconstrued negatively. However, adopting a plant-based diet can be a journey of discovery, increasing enjoyment both in eating and in the cooking process.

Q&A Session

Marie Laure Mourre: Providing information isn't enough to help people change their habits. Education, guidance, and motivation are essential in supporting people to not only try but also discover the benefits: taste, health, and overall well-being.

Rafael Pinto: The issue of pricing is critical; we must ensure that healthier options are also the most affordable, which is not currently the case. In the last cycle of the Common Agricultural Policy, subsidies accounted for about 50% of profits for beef production, whereas for legumes and vegetables, it was less than 5%. Aligning prices with our policy goals is essential.

Maire Laure Mourre: A systematic approach is crucial. Addressing this issue requires action at multiple levels: focusing on individual needs at the micro level, as well as implementing changes in the broader systems at the macro level to promote greater adoption of plant-based diets. Engagement at both community and individual levels is essential.

Rogério concluded the webinar by recalling the consensus that current food environments are unhealthy, exacerbating NCDs and their detrimental effects. As discussed, food production for a growing population also significantly impacts the planet. It is urgent to address both challenges effectively and collectively.

[Click here to watch the streaming of the webinar](#)



Eat Better, Live Better

Webinar on Tuesday 11 June, from 16:30 to 18:00

Organised by

International Diabetes Federation Europe (IDF Europe)
Portuguese Diabetes Association (APDP)
French Diabetes Federation (FFD)



Supported by  Healthy Food
Healthy Planet