



Transition paths to sustainable legume-based systems in Europe

Pulse consumption: potential drivers and barriers towards a sustainable diet

The population growth worldwide poses significant challenges in food production, further aggravated by the low area of arable land suitable for crop production. Therefore, it is necessary to rethink current food production and consumption patterns.

This study aimed to characterise current pulses consumption in adults and to describe the potential drivers and barriers to the inclusion of this source of protein in the diet. Using a quantitative approach, a semi-structured questionnaire was distributed online, and 1174 valid responses were obtained. The most consumed pulses were beans and peas, consumed at least once a week by 48% and 44% of the participants, respectively. When participants were asked about the possibility of replacement, even partially, of animal products for pulses, 15% stated they would not substitute even in a food scarcity scenario.

In the qualitative study, ten individuals involved at different steps of pulses' supply and value chain were interviewed to study behaviours and experiences linked to knowledge and consumption of pulses. Their underrated nutritional value, the high cooking time and the effect of the anti-nutritional factors were commonly pointed out as barriers. Therefore, for the successful replacement, even if partially, of meat by plant-based protein alternatives, like pulses, it is essential to involve different stakeholders in the agri-food chain.

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Agricultural and nutritional policies should be developed or adjusted, aiming to optimise food availability and the population’s health and to promote environmental sustainability. These strategies should include encouraging farmers to produce pulses and to invest in polycultures and more sustainable farming methods.



Figure 1. Various legumes and pulses . Photo credits ©: Mariana Duarte



About TRUE

The EU funded project "TTransition paths to sUustainable legume based systems in Europe" (TRUE) is a balanced practice-research partnership of 24 institutions, which aims to identify the best routes, or “transition paths” to **increase sustainable legume cultivation and consumption across Europe** and includes the entire legume feed and food value chains.

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