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Evolving diets in a changing climate: analysis of the European scenario, with a focus on Italian cuisine recognised as UNESCO intangible Cultural Heritage

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In a constantly evolving world characterised by ever-changing weather conditions, the planet is experiencing a steady rise in temperatures, a phenomenon linked, as reported in the scientific literature, with a growing incidence and worsening of chronic diseases such as diabetes [1,2]. This condition is sensitive to lifestyle factors, including dietary habits. In this context of rethinking what we eat for our health and the planet we live in, the EAT-Lancet Commission proposed the Planetary Health Diet (PHD), which is designed to simultaneously promote human wellbeing and the protection of the environment [3,4]. This study presents an analysis performed across four European macro-regions (Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Western Europe, Eastern Europe), over the period 2012-2023. For each region we evaluated diabetes incidence variations and temperature patterns as well as we assess how current dietary habits diverge from PHD recommendations. In this context, particular attention has been paid to the Italian condition, being Italian cuisine officially inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on December 10, 2025, with the following statement "Italian Cuisine: Between Sustainability and Biocultural Diversity". This was the first time that an entire national cuisine has been recognized, honoring not only the dishes themselves but also the rituals, conviviality, and traditions passed down through the generations [5]. This recognition represents the culmination of a process that has placed at the center the strategic role of the Italian cuisine as an engine of development, cohesion and diplomacy. The added value of Italian cuisine is seen in relation to the well-being of the population, which advocates a low-fat diet and a return to the traditional diet of so-called "poor cooking" (peasant cuisine). Such a result follows the designation of the Mediterranean diet on November 16, 2010, with a rationale that was not only culinary but also cultural and transnational (for Italy, Spain, Greece, Morocco, and later Cyprus, Croatia, Portugal). In fact, it is not just about food, but about practices, knowledge, and traditions that range from the land to the table [6]. In this regard, this work adopts an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to explore how culture, health, dietary habits and temperatures interact synergistically from a One Health perspective.

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