

Report evaluates food diversity in 10 Mediterranean countries

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The report found high consumption of agrobiodiversity in the Mediterranean, such as at this market in Italy. Credit: Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT/E.Gee

The Mediterranean diet is underpinned by diverse foods. However, after

assessing agrobiodiversity consumption, production and conservation in the region, researchers say that further actions are needed—particularly on farms—to ensure food system resilience.

Why measure Mediterranean agrobiodiversity?

What foods comes to your mind when you think about the Mediterranean diet? For most people, the term evokes strong associations with fresh, minimally processed ingredients—[olive oil](#), fresh fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains, followed by fish and [animal products](#)—together making up a form of local food production and consumption that holds societal, economic, and cultural benefits. Encompassing [countries](#) from Italy to Lebanon and Morocco to Greece, can this diet act as a model for more nourishing and environmentally friendly food systems?

In a new report, researchers have examined 10 Mediterranean countries to clarify one important, but often unknown, factor: the status of agrobiodiversity (plants, animals, and microorganisms) in farms, markets, and on plates. Using the *Agrobiodiversity Index*, a tool developed by the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, the report has identified risks (such as [endangered species](#)), but also opportunities (alternative sources of income, climate-smart crops, and nutritious food options).



Assessing 10 countries across the Mediterranean ranging from Morocco (pictured) to Lebanon and France, the Agrobiodiversity report urges for further commitments and actions. Credit: S. Orlando

The report's implications: Diets are just one part of our food system

The good news is that all the Mediterranean countries assessed show above average conservation of agrobiodiversity, reflecting both the region's natural wealth of crops and [wild plants](#), as well as efforts to protect them. However, despite some countries (Lebanon, Italy, France and Spain) showing particularly high levels of diversity in consumption, the overall Mediterranean rating is no higher than the global average. Production scores were even lower, significantly below the [global](#)

[average](#).

What does this gap suggest? Botanical gardens, genebanks, and [nature reserves](#) may be safeguarding agrobiodiversity and diets may include varied foods (including imported items); but, at present, Mediterranean production landscapes are largely dominated by only one or a handful of crops, with only a very small share of natural vegetation (

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