Eating seasonal and local: EUFIC launches 1st ever Europe-wide interactive fruit and vegetables map

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The European Food Information Council (EUFIC) launched today the first-ever Europe-wide fruit and vegetables seasonality interactive map. In the context of the 2021 International Year of Fruits and Vegetables proclaimed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the new map provides accurate and science-based information to guide consumers in making healthy and more sustainable choices.

The tool combines data from established national sources and features over 200 seasonal fruits and vegetables, covers 24 countries, and includes the six European climate regions. Initially launched in English, it will be available also in French, German, Italian and Spanish. Users can filter per country, season, and month, identifying sustainable food options. Thanks to its simple interface and large variety of foods included, the EUFIC map aims to raise awareness on the nutrition and health benefits of fruits and vegetables consumption.

"In Europe we are used to have a very large selection of foods at our disposal all along the year, often detaching us from the origins of the produce. We are proud to launch this innovative map to promote local and seasonal fruits and vegetables consumption, helping people have a diversified, balanced, healthy and sustainable diet’’ said Laura Fernández Celemín, EUFIC’s Director General.
Fruit and vegetables are dietary essentials across cultures, and a minimum amount of 400g per day or five portions of fruits and vegetables is beneficial for health.

Consumers on the lookout for sustainable options

A recent survey conducted by the European Consumers Organization (BEUC) found that two-thirds of consumers are open to changing their eating habits for environmental reasons, with many willing to waste less food at home, buy more seasonal fruit and vegetables and eat more plant-based foods. Yet, two main obstacles people face are the lack of information and the difficulty of identifying sustainable food options.

EUFIC’s innovative tool helps consumers fill these information gaps, providing them a gateway to find reliable information on seasonal and local eating, which may serve both as a guide to vary fruit and vegetables across the year and let people try new recipes with sustainable alternatives.

Seasonal and local food is better for health and the environment

Eating seasonal and local fruit and vegetables benefits both health and the environment. Local food is fresher and more nutritious, especially considering that most of the vitamins and minerals contained in fruits and vegetables are normally lost within 24 hours after being picked. Moreover, many studies revealed that it drastically reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions linked to the supply chain. Fruit and vegetables with the lowest GHG emissions are those grown outside during their natural season without much use of additional energy and consumed in the same country of origin.

However, choosing locally produced and in season fruit and vegetables is just one aspect of eating more sustainably. Increasing plant-based foods such as fruit and vegetables in the diet, reducing animal-based foods such as beef and dairy and minimising food waste are equally as important.

In general, fruit and vegetables have lower GHG emissions compared to animal products such as beef and dairy, in fact as much as 10-50 times lower.

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Background:

The United Nations has proclaimed 2021 the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables creating a unique opportunity to raise awareness on the important role of fruit and vegetables in nutrition, food security and human and planetary health.

Relevant materials:

EUFIC interactive fruit and vegetable map
Are seasonal fruit and vegetables better for the environment? EUFIC article

One bite at a time: consumers and the transition to sustainable food, BEUC survey

About EUFIC

EUFIC - The European Food Information Council, is a consumer-oriented non-profit organisation, founded to make the science behind food and health more accessible and easier to understand among the public. Our mission is to produce science-based content to inspire and empower healthier and more sustainable diets and lifestyles among European citizens.

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