

More plant-based foods can save government over a billion euros

Remarkable scientific findings presented at the Alpro Foundation's 20th anniversary symposium

Ghent – 24 March 2017 – The Alpro Foundation is celebrating its 20th anniversary today. The aim of this independent institute, founded in 1996, is to support scientific research on plant-based nutrition and to promote knowledge and awareness of issues around food and health. So as not to let this special anniversary pass unnoticed, today the Foundation is hosting a celebratory symposium in Brussels, where leading health experts¹ will come together to discuss the latest scientific knowledge about plant-based nutrition.

Over a period of 20 years the Alpro Foundation has obtained remarkable scientific knowledge in the area of the sustainability of plant-based eating and its impact on health. More recently, knowledge has been attained in the field of 'nudging' - positively influencing consumer behaviour with a potential cost saving of more than a billion for the government.

Positive impact on health

"After 20 years of intensive support for scientific research, we can argue with great certainty that plant-based eating helps prevent a variety of diseases which many people in our country will suffer from sooner or later. We are especially proud that 14 renowned academics² are joining us today to talk about their findings in this field", says Dr Stephanie De Vriese, nutrition expert at the Alpro Foundation.

In addition to more plant-based eating - as we see in Mediterranean diets - a dietary pattern with a daily intake of soya products³ also presents various health benefits.

Fewer health costs for the government, and more healthy years of life

One of the speakers, Professor of Health Economics Lieven Annemans, will share interesting insights from his review of the scientific literature. His analysis shows that plant-based eating patterns, such as Mediterranean diets with or without the addition of soya, improves the general quality of life and prolongs life expectancy in good health.

Professor Dr Annemans' research in Belgium and in the United Kingdom analyses the impact of plant-based eating patterns on direct medical costs and indirect costs to society. The research demonstrates that more plant-based eating patterns are cost-effective, reduce economic costs, such as hospital admissions and doctors' bills, as well as increasing the number of healthy years people live, and enabling them to continue working.

"For example, if 10% of the Belgian adult population would switch to a more plant-based diet (legumes, nuts, seeds, fruits, vegetables and reduce their intake of meat), it could save our government almost 1.3 billion euros in 20 years", Professor Dr Annemans adds.

"Daily intake of soy products as part of a plant-based eating pattern has similar results: if 10% of the Belgian adult population would incorporate soy products in their daily diet this would save about 1.5 billion euros in 20 years".

¹ See invitation for complete list of names

² Professor Dr Stefaan De Henauw, Professor Gary Fraser, Professor Heiner Boeing

³ Professor Mark Messina, Dr Marco Mensink and Professor Paolo Magni

Government plays a vital role

Finally, analysis of the British government's recent investment in healthy eating for the prevention of heart disease campaigns has proven highly successful and highlights the important role of government in the area of education and prevention. It is also interesting to note that many government public health nutrition guidelines are now based on a diet that is predominantly plant-based and high saturated fat animal foods are discouraged.

The future of the Alpro Foundation

Over the past 20 years the Alpro Foundation has taken numerous initiatives to spread knowledge about plant-based nutrition among experts and in education. This involves awarding research funds, organising international conferences and symposia at Belgian, British, German and Dutch universities or colleges, and encouraging students of nutrition and dietetics to undertake ground-breaking thesis research within the context of plant-based nutrition and health.

"After 20 years of research by the Alpro Foundation we can establish that plant-based eating patterns achieves exceptional results on three levels: health, sustainability and cost-effectiveness. Scientific research confirms more than ever that NOW is the moment to switch to a more plant-based diet." Over the coming 20 years we will continue on the same path, but with more focus and information for local markets. We hope to make as many people as possible aware of our findings," says Stephanie De Vriese.

About Alpro Foundation

The Alpro Foundation is an independent, non-profit organisation founded in 1996 to support scientific research concerning nutrition, and to promote knowledge and awareness regarding plant-based nutrition, health and sustainability. For this reason, the Alpro Foundation regularly organises congresses and lectures for dieticians and GPs, and distributes newsletters on up-to-date topics to specialists at home and abroad. The Alpro Foundation also presents an annual Award to a Diet & Nutrition student who carries out pioneering thesis research on plant-based nutrition and health.

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