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Coeliac disease and the future of traditional gluten-rich foods: evidence from four EU countries

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Abstract

The rise of gluten-related disorders such as Coeliac Disease (CD) and Gluten Intolerance (GI) across Europe challenges the continued consumption of traditional gluten-rich foods. While the existence of Coeliac disease is becoming more widely recognised, there is still a significant lack of thorough research that explores the complex relationship between gluten intolerance and consumer behaviour in the context of traditional and regional food consumption within the European Union.

This study aimed at analysing data on consumer attitudes on gluten-free products in Belgium, France, Spain, and Cyprus while identifying trends in traditional food consumption. Using the purposive sampling approach and a cross-national survey of 2,005 respondents aged from 18 to 84 years and above, and other key predictors such as sex, reason for purchasing gluten-free products, and ranking of traditional or regional foods, the study explored the cultural value of gluten-rich foods and provided strategies for individuals with Coeliac disease to enjoy them.

This study identified various measures, such as ingredient substitutions, processing techniques and cultural modifications, to enable people with coeliac disease participate safely in traditional culinary practices. This was achieved through an in-depth analysis of existing literature, dietary guidelines and available gluten-free alternatives. Consumer trends explained that while most participants purchased gluten-free products in the stores, others made them at home, others stopped eating regular gluten foods due to unavailability, high prices, and low quality, and others consumed gluten foods occasionally despite dietary preferences. In addition, the research evaluated the feasibility and efficacy of several approaches to promote the integration of people with coeliac disease into traditional dietary practices.

Overall, this study provided an insightful assessment and practical recommendations for promoting dietary inclusion and improving the quality of life of people with coeliac disease.

Keywords: Coeliac disease, gluten-free alternatives, traditional food