



## **FOOD SUSTAINABILITY AND GASTRONOMY IN EDUCATION**

The subject of environment and its protection is closely linked to the agri-food sector, which refers to the concept of 'sustainable food' resulting from the efficient use of resources on the one hand and the conservation of biodiversity on the other. For both aspects, the European Community has developed numerous strategies and actions, including the 'European Biodiversity Strategy 2030' initiative and 'From farm to fork'.

**VET4FOOD project** aims to reflect and provide opportunities for VET students to become practitioners capable of making sustainable choices in tourism and culinary sector. Let's take a look at how we are progressing.



The concept of sustainable food comes from a better and **conscious management of the entire cycle** of production, packaging, distribution, consumption and waste in which every link in the chain, from producer to final consumer, plays a decisive role in improving the impact on the environment.

Consequently, food sustainability is a concept that encompasses not only the **environmental** but also the **social and economic aspects** of food production and consumption.

Environmental sustainability is concerned with reducing the negative impact on the ecosystem, while social sustainability is about equity and human well-being; last but not least, economic sustainability considers longevity and economic stability throughout the food chain.

Sustainable development in the food sector cannot disregard an **aware consumer** whose food choices have a strong impact at various levels.

Knowledge of the dynamics behind food production such as land exploitation water footprint, greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, or the economic consequences of consuming sustainable or non-sustainable food allows us to make conscious food choices that minimise damage to ecosystems, the social and economic system.

An important strategic lever for sustainable development policies is **education in conscious consumption**, especially among young people, to stimulate local economies with Km 0 products, greater consumption of vegetable and seasonal products, and reduced consumption of meat, which is one of the main factors in greenhouse gas emissions. Another goal to focus on is educating the consumer in the use of compostable products and the purchase of IV gamma products that allow important water savings and a reduction in food waste.



## Food sustainability and formal education

In this area, schools can fulfil the task of providing **young people with a food culture** that enables them to make informed choices and appreciate the 'values' of food, starting with its cultural and peculiar values.

It is fundamental to develop critical capacities, such as to adopt more sober and healthy eating styles, evaluating alternatives to the 'unique flavour' and globalised foods such as snacks and fast food. With this in mind, the involvement of young people becomes fundamental.

According to this scenario, **gastronomy is a key player** in the promotion of sustainable food consumption, and innovative culinary practices are paving the way for a more conscious approach to food and proper consumption and management of food waste in order to reduce environmental impact and maintain biodiversity.

**'Sustainable' chefs** have the power to transform food production into a more environmentally conscious approach by promoting seasonal ingredients and local producers who respect sustainable agricultural practices and in this perspective, the training of young chefs cannot ignore such virtuous practices.

The VET4FOOD project, having analysed the areas related to food sustainability, intends to provide teachers and students of VET with a set of tools to approach these issues using **edutainment** (education and entertainment) techniques to educate on sustainable food practices with engaging methods in the theoretical and practical areas.

Our project adopted edutainment techniques to use entertainment to make information on food sustainability more accessible and enjoyable, encouraging behavioural changes towards a more sustainable food system. The application of theoretical knowledge to culinary practice is equally important in order to have skills that are expendable in a sustainable society.

In conclusion, it can be said that in order **to become conscious citizens**, the issue of food sustainability must be addressed through effective education of students in ecological, economic and social fields with the collaboration of governments, local authorities, associations and educational institutions.

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