eda Fact sheet

uniting dairy excellence & ambition

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EU School Scheme

EDA is pleased with the prominent place of milk and dairy in the current European Commission school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme. Dairy products are a significant contributor to the health and well-being of children and adolescents, especially in the critical period of growth and development. The EU school scheme plays a key role in educating younger generations on the importance of a healthy and balanced diet, and hence encourages the consumption of highly nutritious foods such as milk and dairy. In July 2021, the European Commission launched a revision of the EU school scheme as part of the Farm to Fork strategy. EDA strongly believes that this is a great opportunity for the European Union to uncork the full potential of the scheme and increase consumption of fresh fruit, vegetables and milk, so it can meet international and national nutritional recommendations by guaranteeing optimal conditions for healthy dietary habits of children and adolescents across the EU.

- Milk and dairy nutrients are of vital importance for the health of children and adolescents
- Milk and dairy consumption is declining in children and adolescents
- Decreasing dairy consumption may come hand in hand with rising micronutrient deficiencies in children
- Dairy has health benefits beyond its nutritional value
- Flavoured milk is a good option to increase dairy consumption in children

Milk and dairy nutrients are vital for the health of children and adolescents

Dairy products provide a **multitude of essential vitamins and minerals** that are of vital significance for health throughout the life cycle, but **expressly during the growth and developmental phase** that occurs during childhood and puberty (Fiorito et al.,2008). Dairy products are a primary source of **highly bio-available calcium** which accounts for 50% of children's total calcium intake (Vissers P et al. 2011; Coudray B. et al.,2011).

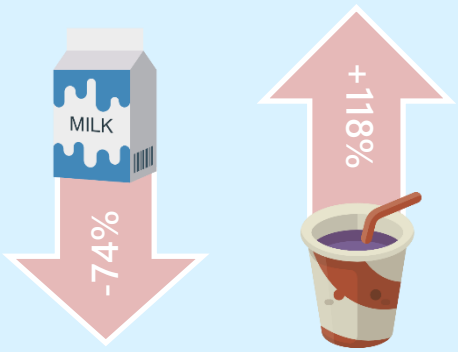
Dairy is also a source of **phosphorus**, **potassium**, **vitamin B2**, **iodine** and **B12**. In addition, dairy products provide children with energy, high-quality protein and essential and non-essential fatty acids (Dror and Allen, 2014).

However, despite its contribution to nutrient intake and status, children's and adolescents' consumption of milk and dairy products has decreased in recent years, with a **substantial portion of youth failing to meet recommendations** (Dror and Allen 2014).

Dairy is good for the:

- Brain
- Bones
- Teeth
- Muscles
- Nervous system

Since 1965, milk consumption has decreased by 74%, and consumption of juices and carbonated beverages has increased by 118% (Schettler and Gustafson, 2004).



Milk and dairy consumption is declining in children and adolescents

Several EU Member States e.g., France, Belgium, Ireland, and Spain recommend around 3-4 servings of dairy products per day for children. Others, including Denmark, Finland and The Netherlands recommend the consumption of around 500-600 mL of dairy foods per day for children. **However, many children fail to meet the dietary recommendations for dairy intake and hence nutrient requirements.** Dietary consumption data demonstrates that milk consumption in children is steadily declining (Lasater et al. 2011; Lioret S et al. 2010; Keller et al. 2009). **When milk is removed from the diet, it is often replaced by potentially nutrient-poor, energy-dense foods and beverages.**

Decreasing dairy consumption may come hand in hand with rising micronutrient deficiencies in children

The drop in consumption of milk may be associated with a high percentage of children and adolescents **failing to meet the recommendations for calcium** (Lambert et al., 2004; Greer and Krebs, 2006; Elmadfa and Freisling, 2009) **iodine** (Diethelm et al. 2014) and **vitamin D** (Diethelm et al. 2014).

Studies show a rise in childhood obesity coinciding with a decline in dairy consumption and an increase in sweetened nutrient-poor beverage consumption (Schettler and Gustafson, 2004). **Scientific evidence suggests that soft drinks may negatively impact calcium absorption and contribute to bone loss** (Wyshak and Frisch, 1994) due to their high phosphoric acid content.

> The failure of the EU School Milk Scheme to include a broader category of dairy products in the basic eligible products that would cater to the preference of a wider audience could lead to an exacerbation of the negative trend of decreasing milk consumption and prevalent micronutrient deficiencies in children.

Dairy has health benefits beyond its nutritional value

As part of a healthy and balanced diet, dairy brings about health effects that go significantly beyond its nutritional value. Dairy foods are rich in calcium, which is essential for **healthy teeth**. Calcium in combination with amino acids and bioactive peptides found in milk are responsible for **healthy bone development** in children and adolescents and optimise **peak bone mass development**. This is of critical importance considering the escalating levels of osteoporosis and bone fractures in the elderly population. In fact, there is growing scientific evidence suggesting that calcium and protein intake during childhood and puberty **can significantly minimise future osteoporosis risk** (Cochrane 2010, Rozzoli 2014).

Adequate consumption of milk and dairy products (i.e. 3 or more servings per day) is associated with **lower blood pressure** (Yuan et al. 2013), **lower incidence of cardiovascular disease** and **type 2 diabetes** (Rice BH et al. 2013).

Despite concerns that the energy found in dairy may contribute to childhood obesity, scientific research shows a beneficial inverse association between the consumption of milk and dairy products on **indicators of body weight and adiposity**. There is a neutral or inverse association between the consumption of milk and dairy products and indicators of adiposity, incidence of dental caries and hypertension (Dror and Allen 2014). Milk consumption is inversely associated with body mass in children i.e. children who drink milk are more likely to have **a lower body mass** than children who do not (TheDairyCouncil).

"Milk and dairy products play a key role in healthy human nutrition and development throughout life, but especially in childhood" (FAO, 2013)

The benefits of consuming flavoured milk and yoghurts outweigh any adverse effects

Basic foods like milk contain **naturally present sugars such as lactose and galactose**. Flavoured milk and yoghurts are a good way to increase milk consumption among children to enhance the nutritional value of their diet. Studies demonstrate that the **inclusion of flavoured milk is associated with higher total milk consumption and better overall diet quality without any adverse impact on weight** (Nicklas TA et al. 2013; Fayet F et al. 2013; Murphy et al.2008).

Flavoured milk and yoghurts are good options to increase milk consumption among children to enhance the nutritional value of their diet.

A recent study showed that the removal of flavoured milk from schools leads to a decrease in overall milk intake and negatively impacts nutrient intake (Quann et al.2013) and leads to an increase in milk wastage (failing to completely finish milk portion) (Hanks et al. 2014).

Many studies have demonstrated a beneficial impact of yoghurt consumption on several **cardiometabolic outcomes** including a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, hypertension and stroke (Gao et al. 2013; Aune et al. 2013) and no adverse effects on coronary heart disease (Soedamah Mathu et al. 2012).

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