



## **Healthy foods for thin wallets – New European project gives people at risk of poverty a CHANCE**

Living on the poverty line\* is not only associated with poor economy but will also often bring with it other problems such as nutrition related ill-health. There is a direct link between income and quality of the diet – with decreasing socio-economic status diets becoming more and more unbalanced. One of the reasons for this is that low incomers often cannot afford enough nutritious foods<sup>1</sup>. Lower education levels may as well explain why dietary habits are unsatisfactory in these people. Education is important for the level of nutrition knowledge, which in turn influence on food habits, e.g. fruit and vegetable intake<sup>2</sup>. The result: greater risk of overweight and obesity and related problems such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, but also micronutrient deficiencies. In Europe, 81 million people are at risk of poverty<sup>3</sup>. The increased disease risk associated with poor nutrition results in a significant health care and welfare burden for society in addition to the sufferance of the individual.

In the European Commission-funded project CHANCE, researchers and industry partners will together develop appealing, affordable and healthy food products that can prevent common nutritional problems in people at risk of poverty. To make the foods available for the thinner wallets the CHANCE project will explore low cost technologies and ingredients, such as by-products rich in fiber resulting from the production of fruit juices and other derivatives from food processing. Developing these new food products require technical knowledge. However, equally important is to develop a good understanding of the lifestyle and needs of the people that are at risk of poverty.

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\* Individuals living in households where the equivalised income is below the threshold of 60% of the national equivalised median income (Eurostat)

Statistics from Eurostat indicate that women and elderly are two groups of special concern but CHANCE researchers intend to further clarify which are the major groups at risk of poverty in Europe. Once these groups have been identified the questions are: What do they eat? Is the major problem overweight and obesity, or are they unhealthy because of inadequate intakes of micronutrients, such as iron and vitamin B12? To find answers to these questions, CHANCE researchers will review the scientific literature, distribute questionnaires about dietary habits, take measurements such as weight, height and waist circumference as well as assess nutritional and health status.

Finally, CHANCE researcher will study what the identified risk group perceive as barriers to healthful eating as well as what retailers, food and drink industry and other actors in the food chain think keeps this particular group away from nutritious foods. This will allow food processing partners in CHANCE to develop healthful food products that actually also would end up in their shopping baskets.

An important part of the CHANCE project is to create awareness among policy makers, consumer organisations, scientists, food and drink manufacturers, and health and social care professionals about the CHANCE project and its outcomes. To make sure these stakeholders are reached, the European Food Information Council (EUFIC) takes lead of the dissemination and communication activities within the project.

Coordinator of the CHANCE consortium Professor Francesco Capozzi at the University of Bologna, summarises the project: "In spite of the fact that our major diet-related diseases are more common in lower incomers at risk of poverty only li-

mitted efforts are made to develop healthier products in the lower price range. By exploring means to lower the production costs and increasing the knowledge about this particular group of consumers CHANCE will hopefully stimulate development of food products that can make a difference as well as make them available and attractive to people who really need them”.

## REFERENCES

1. Aggarwal A, et al. (2011). Does diet cost mediate the relation between socioeconomic position and diet quality? *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*: advance online publication 11 May 2011.
2. De Vriendt T, et al. (2009). Determinants of nutrition knowledge in young and middle-aged Belgian women and the association with their dietary behaviour. *Appetite* 52: 788-792
3. Eurostat (2010). Income and living conditions in Europe.

**Notes:** CHANCE is a multidisciplinary consortium consisting of 17 partners from 9 EU countries. Ten universities and research institutes together with 5 small- and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) from the food and drink sector are engaged in the research and technology development activities within the project. EUFIC - the European Food Information Council and CEN – the European Committee for Standardization take part of the consortium to ensure information about the project and its results reach out to a wider European audience. Coordinators for the project are Prof. Francesco Capozzi and Prof. Alessandra Bordoni at University of Bologna, Italy.

For more information about the project please visit [www.chancefood.eu](http://www.chancefood.eu) or contact Cecilia Wanhainen at [cecilia.wanhainen@eufic.org](mailto:cecilia.wanhainen@eufic.org) or on +32 2 506 89 89.