

Commodity consumption average in Mediterranean countries (1962–1998) compared with Australia

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As part of our study of Mediterranean diets (1) and their influence in Australia, we have collected consumption data for 15 major commodities from FAO Food Balance Sheets for the years 1962–1998 and calculated the averages all in kg/head/year over this 37 yr period for Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Croatia, Bosnia, Albania, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco (Table 1).

Countries	Potatoes	Rice	Wheat	Cereals	Maize	Fruits	Vegetables
Middle Mediterranean countries	35.5	4.5	146.5	173.4	4	81.5	143
Range of 15 Mediterranean countries	15–106	0.7–30	97–188	108–233	0.7–91	25–164	52–232
Australian average	53	4	85	95	5	85	74

Table 2 shows the ‘median’ average consumption of each commodity (ie consumption in the countries with the ninth and 10th highest consumption of the set of 18 Mediterranean countries). Second row shows the range of consumption of each commodity (lowest country and highest country for that commodity). The third row shows Australian average consumption figures.

Countries	Animal fat	Vege oil	Olive oil	Fish	Meat	Milk	Pulses	Wine
Middle Mediterranean countries	4.5	10	2.15	6	32.5	145.5	6.5	3
Range of 15 Mediterranean countries	1–20	3–18	0–19	1–34	14–103	31–252	2–11	0–90
Australian average	16	11	0.5	17	121	252	3	14

Compared with the Mediterranean countries, Australian consumption was below the bottom country of the range for wheat and cereals. It was within the Mediterranean range, but low for olive oil, vegetables and pulses. It was well within the Mediterranean range for potatoes, rice, maize, fruits, vegetable oils, fish and wine. Australian consumption was high, though still within the Mediterranean range, for animal fat. Australian consumption was at the top end of the range in Mediterranean countries for milk and above the range for meat. By the end of 1990s Australia’s meat consumption had declined to coincide with the top of the Mediterranean range. Cereal consumption (according to FAO) was still below the Mediterranean range. In conclusion Australia has consumption patterns within the Mediterranean range for most of these commodities.

1. Noah A, Truswell AS. There are many Mediterranean diets. *Asia Pacific J Clin Nutr* 2001; 10: 2–9.