



SHIFTING PROTEIN CONSUMPTION PATTERNS – INSIGHTS FROM ROMANIA AND NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

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Abstract: The structure of protein consumption has significant implications for public health, food security, and environmental sustainability. This study provides a comparative analysis of the percentage contribution of various protein sources to total per capita protein intake in Romania and its neighboring countries - Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Serbia, and Ukraine - over the past three decades

• Results and discussions

• Introduction

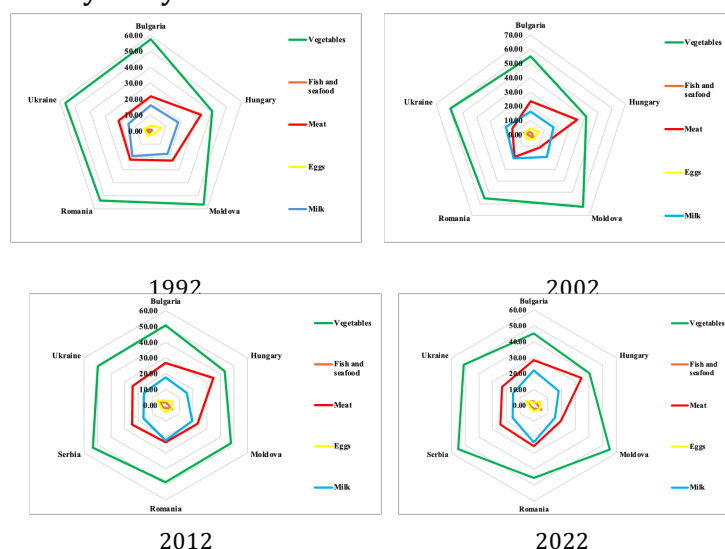
Dietary patterns have undergone notable transformations in Central and Eastern Europe over the past three decades, driven by a complex interplay of socio-economic, political, and cultural shifts. Among these changes, the structure of protein consumption has emerged as a particularly relevant topic, both for public health and for broader concerns related to food system sustainability. Protein is an essential macronutrient, and the balance between plant-based and animal-based sources can influence nutritional adequacy, environmental footprints, and food security outcomes. Understanding how protein intake patterns have evolved within and across countries provides a foundation for assessing current challenges and for informing future food policies.

• Material and method

This study provides a comparative analysis of dietary protein consumption patterns in Romania and neighboring countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Serbia, and Ukraine, over more than three decades. The analysis is based on external third-party data.

The choice of 1992 as the baseline year corresponds to a turning point in regional data reporting, following the dissolution of centralized systems and the gradual alignment of national statistics with international standards. The study covers the period from 1992 to the most recent year for which complete and comparable data are available for all six countries.

The results illustrate the percentage contribution of five major protein sources, vegetables, fish and seafood, meat, eggs, and milk, to the total per capita protein intake in six Eastern European countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, and Ukraine. The information is organized across four reference years: 1992, 2002, 2012, and 2022, allowing for the observation of structural changes over three decades. Each entry reflects the share of a given protein category in relation to the total protein consumed daily by an average individual in that specific country and year..



• Conclusions

Despite progress in food availability and access over the last three decades, the structure of protein intake remains a critical lens through which to evaluate food security. According to the four pillars of food security - availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability - diversified, affordable, and nutritionally adequate protein sources are essential for building resilient food systems.