

SESSION 2

GastronomiQc Lab's International Rendez-vous - Sustainable Food in Gastronomy

Keynote Presentation

Living-Lab Mycotour: Towards a Sustainable Use of Wild Forest Mushrooms and Truffles as a Driver for Rural Development and Territorial Attractiveness

Fernando Martínez-Peña¹

¹ Center for Agro-Food Research and Technology of Aragon (CITA), Spain

Fungi provide most of forest biodiversity and play an indispensable ecological role in ecosystems. They also generate multiple socio-economic benefits and contribute to human health and well-being. Consequently, they help to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are a source of nature-based opportunities aligned with European policy priorities.

One of the main ecosystem services provided by wild edible mushrooms is mycotourism. This is a specialised tourism product attracting individuals to a territory with high mycological productivity (mushrooms and truffles) to enjoy harvesting and mycological culture which eventually converge towards gastronomy.

Mushrooms are highly appreciated in the cuisine of many European countries for their diversity of aromas, textures, flavours, colours... But also, for being rich in bioactive compounds with important therapeutic qualities such as antibiotics, anti-tumour, immunomodulators, anti-inflammatories, neuronal protectors and immune system boosters. They stand out for their nutritional properties and are perfect for gluten-free and vegan menus, as they are an alternative and sustainable source of protein with low environmental impact. However, the culinary offer has not yet incorporated most of the potential values of mycological resources, and both the stakeholders involved in the mycotourism experience and local facilities need to adapt to the diversity of mycotourist profiles, to international tourism and to inclusivity.

The MYCOTOUR project proposes improving the mycotourism experience and exchanging best practices between territories through the creation of an experimentation environment or "Living-Lab" where users, scientists and stakeholders (local chefs, harvesters, travel agencies, mycological guides...) will be able to co-create culinary products and services tailored to consumers. Aspects such as the organisation and training of stakeholders, digitalisation, territorial attractiveness, sustainable management, adaptation to climate change, internationalisation, inclusiveness, and citizen science will be addressed in this Living-Lab.