



**UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES AND VETERINARY MEDICINE CLUJ-NAPOCA, ROMANIA
BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTER
18TH JANUARY 2019**

10:00-10:15 OPENING

Welcome address by the organizers (*Andrei D. Mihalca, Dan Vodnar*)

Presentation of the ERC=Science² project - Theme FOOD (*Florin Zubascu*)

Message from the Ministry of Research and Innovation (*Ioana Ispas*)

10:15-11:15 ROUND TABLE (*Moderators: Andrei D. Mihalca & Dan Vodnar*)

Plant foods in human evolution

Amanda Georganna Henry (Universiteit Leiden, The Netherlands)

Cooking with Plants in Prehistoric Europe

Soultana Maria Valamoti/Tasoula Dimoula (Aristotelio Panepistimio Thessalonikis, Greece)

Rescuing seeds' heritage: agriculture and innovation

Dulce Freire, University of Lisbon (PT)

Food as means to preventing diseases

Nastasia Belc (National R&I Institute on Food Bioresources (RO))

11:15-12:00 SCIENCE-CAFÉ (Moderator Dan Vodnar)

Informal exchanges & interaction between the speakers and the public

12:00-13:00 BUFFET

Plant foods in human evolution

Amanda G. Henry

Your decisions about food are in part determined by your culture, biology, and environment. The same factors influenced the diets of our ancient ancestors, the hominins. While meat consumption is often emphasized in human evolution, my project focuses on the potential role of plant foods in several key evolutionary shifts, and seeks to explore how biology, environment, and culture may have influenced a hominin's choice of plant foods. I have documented the use of plants by Neanderthals and earlier hominins. I have also shown that cooking is an energetically expensive task, and was therefore not as sudden and transformative a cultural invention as previously argued. My data also suggests that the idea of a single "Paleodiet" is misleading at best. This project has the potential to tell us much about our relationships with our food, which still affect our health and well-being today.

Plant foods of Ancient Europe: an interdisciplinary exploration of prehistoric cuisine in the context of ERC project PLANTCULT

Sultana Maria Valamoti

ERC project PLANTCULT aims to investigate how cuisine shaped and modified cultural identities in prehistoric European societies over time. The project focuses on ancient plant ingredients and plant foods found at prehistoric agricultural settlements (7th-1st millennium B.C.) located in a large area from Greece to Central Europe. We are in search of prehistoric recipes based on plant food ingredients and to do this we are integrating different lines of evidence associated with culinary practice in prehistoric Europe and various analytical methods. To this end the project methodological tools comprise archaeobotany-including anthracology and plant micro-remains, ceramic studies - including thin sections and residue analysis, experimental archaeology, ethnoarchaeology, data-bases, GIS and spatiotemporal analyses. The synthesis of all these lines of evidence will reveal culinary traditions and changes over time and across space in a large part of Europe.

Rescuing seeds' heritage: agriculture and innovation

Dulce Freire

Can past agrarian and food experiences contribute to building sustainable futures? Adopting a transdisciplinary methodology, the ReSEED project examines the changes in agriculture related to cultivated seeds, environment and human action since the 18th century. The analysis is focused on the Iberian Peninsula, which was the gateway to many of the seeds from the new worlds that stimulated agrarian and food innovations across the European continent. Many of the food products (tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, corn, beans...) that nowadays are common in Europe were still novelties in the 18th and 19th centuries. The European regions worked as enormous laboratories where experiments were developed to adapt these seeds and plants to various local ecological and social conditions. Many new seeds were introduced and many old ones were lost. Regional agricultural practices have changed and so have food habits. Relevant data about these long-term transformations can be found in historical archives, botanic gardens, herbaria, and museums. Rescuing these heritages is crucial to understand the different regional European pathways.

Food as means to preventing diseases

Nastasia Belc

The main role of the diet is to provide sufficient nutrients to meet an individual's nutritional requirements. There is now an increase in scientific evidence to support the hypothesis that some foods and food components have physiological and psychological benefits in addition to providing basic nutrients. Today, nutrition science has advanced from the classic concepts of avoiding nutritional deficiencies and basic nutritional adequacy to the concept of "positive" or "optimal" nutrition. The focus of research has shifted more to identifying biologically active components in foods that have the potential to optimize physical and mental health and which can reduce the risk of illness. Many traditional foods, including fruits, vegetables, soybeans, whole grains and milk, have been found to contain ingredients with potential health benefits. In addition to these foods, new foods are developed to improve or incorporate these beneficial health-promoting ingredients or desirable physiological effects.