

Trends in food supplements differ from country to country, new study finds

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A new study, published today in the journal in [PLOS ONE](#), shows which plant food supplements are most popular across Europe, with consumers using them to complement their diets or to maintain health.

The team of researchers from the Fundación para la Investigación Nutricional and the University of Surrey found that these products are taken in many different forms, including in tea, juice or by tablet. They analysed data from six European countries, collecting information from 2359 adult consumers of plant [food supplements](#) in Finland, Germany, Italy, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The main findings include:

- A total of 1288 different products were reported across the six countries with the highest proportion of different [plant food supplements](#) being used in Italy and Spain. In the United Kingdom, the number of different products was approximately half that of the other countries
- In the United Kingdom, [evening primrose](#) was by far the most frequently used botanical ingredient, followed by ginseng and St. John's Wort
- 22.2% of participants said that they use plant food supplements when experiencing a 'flare up or worsening of a condition'
- The most common dose forms were capsules and pills/tablets/lozenges

"The popularity of food supplements is on the rise in Europe, but currently, there is a lack of data on the use of these products. The marketing of these supplements depends on national legislation, which differs widely across European Member States," said Professor Monique Raats, co-author of the study from the University of Surrey.

"Our research will be useful in informing authorities and food businesses of the popularity of specific products in their country, so that they can make more useful judgements on legislation and marketing. It will also help to ensure that the appropriate guidance and policies can be put in place for products that are being widely used."

Alicia García-Álvarez, Researcher at the Fundación para la Investigación Nutricional, comments: "The survey was carried out using the same methodology in the six countries. We now know that in these countries a wide variety of plant food supplements are consumed. 83.7% of respondents consume only one product, and 51.5% of products usually contain a single botanical ingredient. "

Provided by University of Surrey

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