Eating Well Together: How Food Literacy Connects to Health Literacy



Across Europe, health literacy has been recognized one of the most powerful paths we have for building resilient communities. The ability to understand and act on health information - whether it concerns mental health, chronic illness, or preventive care - shapes outcomes in ways that policy alone cannot. But there is a missing chapter in most health literacy frameworks, and it sits at the heart of every home and every kitchen: the food we eat.

At the Nordic Wellbeing Academy, we have long understood that wellbeing cannot be separated from the systems that sustain us - including our food systems. A truly health-literate community or family does not only know how to read a medication label or navigate a healthcare appointment. It alsounderstands where its food comes from, who produces it, and what those choices mean for the planet and the people around us. In this sense, food literacy is health literacy.

This is one of the reasons why the Nordic Wellbeing Academy is a committed partner in the Forgotten Fish project. On the surface, Forgotten Fish is about underutilised marine species - the small, fast-reproducing fish that get caught in artisanal nets across European coastal waters, only to be discarded because industrial systems have decided they are not worth trading. But look closer, and the project is about something much larger: changing the way professionals and communities relate to their food, their seas, and each other. And about how to transform challenge into opportunity and resilience.

Forgotten fish species are, by almost every nutritional measure, excellent food. Rich in omega-3 fatty acids, protein, and micronutrients, they are in many cases more beneficial than the farmed salmon that dominates European supermarket shelves. And yet, because they lack commercial branding and because catering professionals have never been trained to cook with them, they go to waste - and an opportunity for both human health and ocean health is lost.

Through training modules, cross-border learning exchanges, and collaboration with vocational education providers across Denmark, Greece, and Italy, Forgotten Fish is building a new kind of food literacy. One that is rooted in place, respectful of artisanal knowledge, and relevant to the real challenges facing Europe's coastal communities today. We believe that when a chef learns to cook a forgotten fish, something shifts - not just in the kitchen, but in the way they understand their role in a wider food system. That is the transformation we are working toward.

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