Epidemiological transition and health in North Africa

Study of epidemiological transition in North Africa is a major issue for defining health policies adapted to national economic possibilities and socio-cultural needs of the population.

OBJECTIVE
TAHINA’s objective is to study the characteristics of epidemiological transition and related practices in order to propose new preventive measures.

As a research project financed by the European Union (INCO-MED, FP5), TAHINA brings together researchers from France, Tunisia, Algeria, and Belgium (agronomists, economists, nutritionists, epidemiologists, doctors, economists, sociologists and anthropologists), working together to produce simultaneous analysis of the medical situation and the socio-economic and cultural context.

Characterizing transition
The project focuses first and foremost on characterizing epidemiological transition by studying its socio-economic, cultural and food determinants. For this purpose, a causal model based on an analysis of existing data and surveys of households’ living conditions, food consumption and physical activities has been developed (sample of 4,818 households in Algeria and 6,651 households in Tunisia).

The attitudes and practices of actors (population, health professionals, and decision-makers) toward transition have also been analyzed in order to assess their potential for changing lifestyles and policies.

Proposing new opportunities for preventive actions
Finally, the project seeks to promote new approaches to health policy and to strengthen the capacity of health sectors in the Maghreb for managing transition and setting up policies that take into account changes in lifestyles. In Morocco and Algeria, the results of the project have led to consideration of new options. In Algeria, the Ministry of Health is thus thinking of establishing food and nutritional monitoring systems using the information provided by TAHINA.

Composition of Tunisian foods.

Food contrasts during the transition phase.