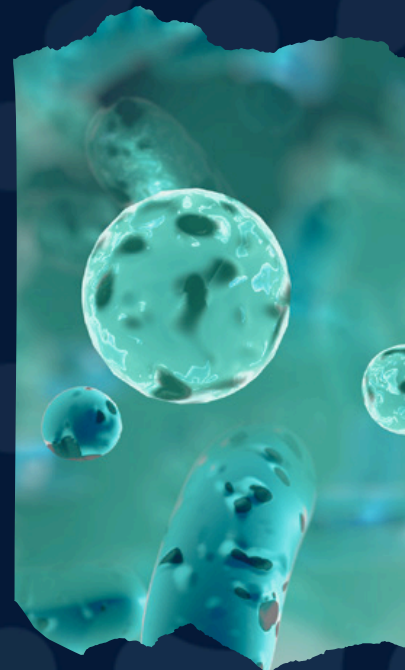




A HOLISTIC  
APPROACH  
TO PROBIOTICS  
IN THE EU  
FOR INFORMED  
CONSUMERS  
AND  
A SUSTAINABLE  
FOOD INDUSTRY



## Opening Words

**Bart Degeest**

**President, IPA Europe**



Evolving trends in consumer behaviours in Europe have shifted the attention, towards new methods of producing and consuming food to enhance its safety, quality, and sustainability. At the same time, the human microbiome is increasingly recognized for its crucial role in maintaining health and well-being.

Probiotic foods and supplements have recently gained popularity due to their content of beneficial microorganisms, typically bacteria and yeast.

These microorganisms can be incorporated into a wide variety of foods, food supplements and beverages, and can positively impact the body by maintaining or supporting its functions, associated with good health and performance, when consumed in adequate amounts and under specific conditions.

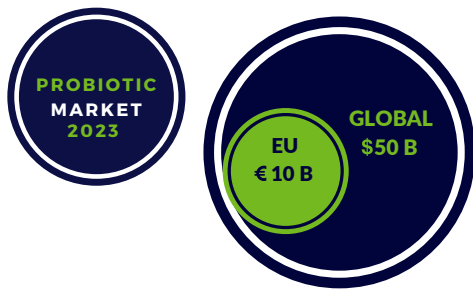
While they are associated with potential benefits, such as improving gut health, digestion, and the immune system, it's important to note that the term probiotic itself refers to a category of products and does not constitute a specific health claim.

The term "probiotics", was established in the late 1980s by WHO/FAO and has since been globally recognized as a category name, featured in thousands of publications.

However, the European Commission, two decades later, refers to the WHO/FAO definition but altered the conditions, reclassifying probiotics as a health claim only.

Today, several European Countries have implemented national initiatives and allow the use of the term 'probiotic' on the labels and in commercial communication under certain conditions.

Within IPA Europe, the European probiotic industry is engaged in creating favourable conditions to uphold the competitiveness and the quality of the probiotic food and food supplements industry, and foster a regulatory environment that provides consistency and promotes innovation.



**The global probiotic market continues its steady growth in both food and supplements,** with 2023 showing strong performance and forecasts indicating further expansion in 2024.

In Europe, the retail value of probiotics, (sour milk products, yoghurts & dairy based drinking products, food supplements), **grew from € 9.7B in 2022 to € 10B in 2023.**

The **European-5 countries** (Germany, France, the U.K, Italy, and Spain) **lead the region, representing more than 50% of the European probiotic market.**

**The fast-evolving European e-commerce:** e-com growth in 2021 and 2022 for probiotic supplements was driven by Europe, with 48% of online probiotic products sourced from outside Europe.

## EU Market size

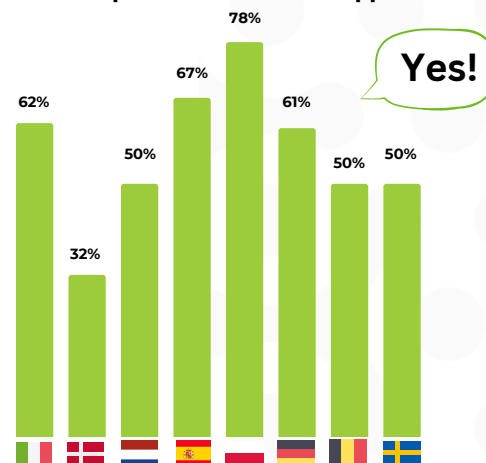


## Consumer Survey

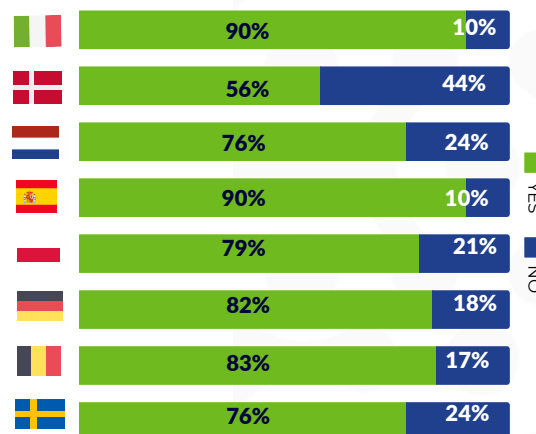
A survey of 8,000 consumers across eight European countries found that 57% feel they are not sufficiently informed about products that contain probiotics, and 79% would like to know more.

The European Commission's restrictive interpretation hampers the growth of the probiotic food and supplement market, creating fragmentation and limiting consumer access to clear information.

**Do you know what probiotic foods and supplements are?**



**Would you like to see the term "probiotic" indicated on the product?**



# How Probiotics Work

Probiotics\* are microorganisms that can be beneficial for our health in various ways.

Seven commonly used types of probiotic microorganisms include ***Lactobacillus***, ***Bifidobacterium***, ***Saccharomyces***, ***Streptococcus***, ***Enterococcus***, ***Escherichia***, and ***Bacillus***.

Each of these consists of numerous cells of microorganisms that can positively affect the gut microbiota, support the immune system, or provide other health benefits.

To be considered a probiotic, a food or product must contain a specific minimum number of viable cells of microorganisms, which is necessary to achieve the associated health benefits.

It's important to note that **each probiotic strain has unique effects**.

Some probiotic strains might help improve symptoms of functional disorders such as ulcerative colitis or irritable bowel syndrome.

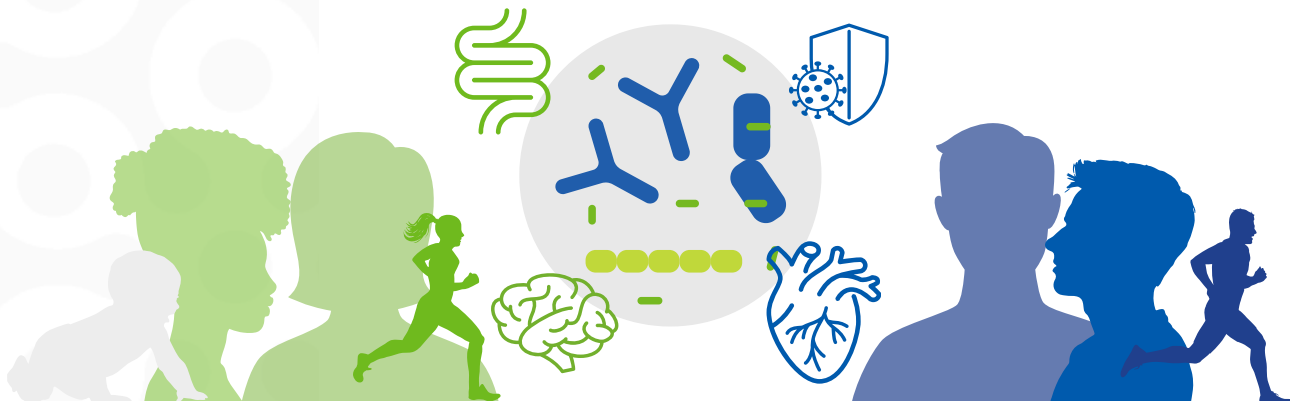
Regular consumption of probiotics has been shown to lower the likelihood of upper respiratory tract infections like the common cold and reduce the risk of antibiotic-associated diarrhea.

Probiotics also play a crucial role in improving nutrient and phytonutrient bio-accessibility in humans. However, the efficacy of probiotics depends on the species and strain of bacteria, the dosage, and the individual's health status.

It is acknowledged that modulating our gut microbiota through prebiotics\*\* and probiotics holds significant potential for many health benefits. Nonetheless, more research is needed to fully understand the effects of probiotics on other health outcomes, such as blood cholesterol, body weight, and body fat.

*\*Probiotics are living microorganisms that, when consumed in adequate amounts, can provide health benefits.*

*\*\*Prebiotics are substrates including non-digestible fibres that act as food for microorganisms, promoting their growth and activity.*



**The International Probiotics Association Europe (IPA Europe) is committed to promoting the responsible use of probiotics in food and supplements.**

Clear requirements are crucial to prevent misuse of the term 'probiotic' and to ensure consumer clarity.

**This initiative supports food safety, consumer protection, and the advancement of the European food industry by establishing clear standards.**

**IPA Europe recommends that the term 'probiotic' be applied to products and in commercial communications only when four essential criteria are met.**



The characterization of the species level and identification at strain level



The Probiotic strain/s must be safe for the intended use



The Probiotic status should be scientifically documented



Probiotic strains must be alive in the product and in sufficient amount up to the end of shelf life.



IPA Europe/ ISAPP open-access paper  
"Criteria to qualify microorganisms as  
'probiotic' in foods and dietary supplements"

# IPA Europe

## The Voice of Probiotics in Europe

IPA Europe is the European chapter of International Probiotics Association (IPA), established in Brussels in 2015. We bring together a unique forum of about 100 worldwide leading producers of probiotics cultures, probiotic foods and food supplements, nutritional and therapeutic products.

### MISSION AND ACTIVITIES

- Create a favorable environment for probiotics in Europe
- Gain acceptance of the term “probiotic” as a defined category
- Actively participate to EFSA consultations as registered stakeholders and to the EC consultations and advisor meetings



Advance technology  
and quality best  
practices



Engaging with  
government bodies, EU  
institutions and key  
stakeholders



Drive Regulations,  
and Standard in EU and  
Worldwide (CODEX)

### IPA Europe Members





# References

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