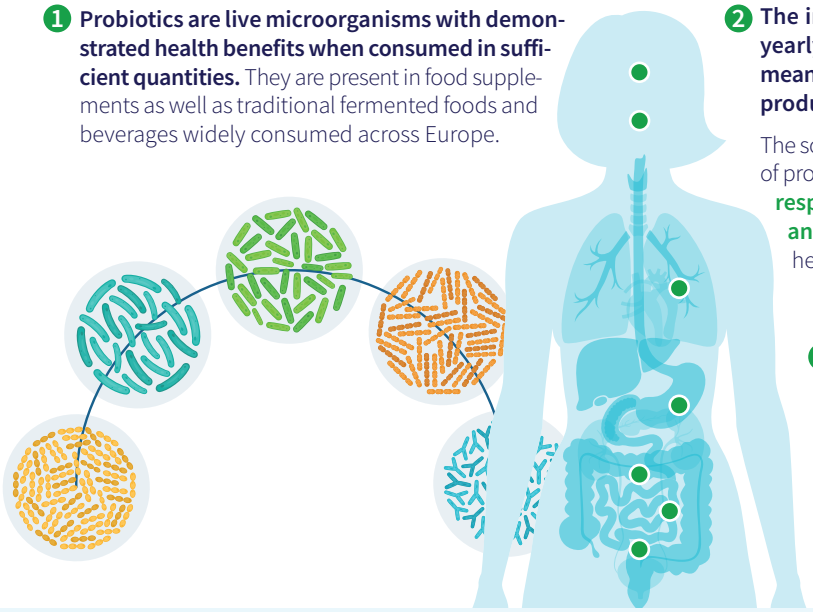
Probiotics in Europe:
Unlocking Health and Economic Benefits

IPA EUROPE
INTERNATIONAL PROBIOTICS ASSOCIATION

Key Findings and Policy Recommendations from the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEA)

1 Probiotics: The Bridge Between Food and Health. Why do Probiotics Matter?

1. **Probiotics are live microorganisms with demonstrated health benefits when consumed in sufficient quantities.** They are present in food supplements as well as traditional fermented foods and beverages widely consumed across Europe.



2. **The increased use of probiotic can lead into at least €10 billion yearly savings for EU healthcare systems, while also delivering meaningful improvements in citizens' quality of life and economic productivity.**

The socio-economic impact assessment explores the potential support of probiotics across several areas, including **gut microbiome balance, respiratory and oral health, women's health, mental well-being, and immune function.** Even a 1% improvement for each area of health would have a strong impact.

3. Despite growing political interest in microbiome health, **inconsistent communication and lack of definitions of probiotic food and food supplements is slowing innovation, consumers awareness and probiotics uptake.**

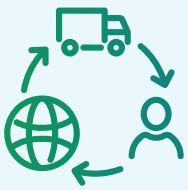
2 Where does Nutrition Stand in the EU?

The EU should incorporate the proven public-health benefits of nutrition, healthy dietary practices, and beneficial microorganisms like probiotics into its food policies. Since this is not the case today, products that can support health such as probiotics cannot fully communicate their benefits to consumers.

- **Claims related to prevention are not possible under the existing legislation,** meaning that the beneficial role of probiotics in prevention cannot be transfered to consumers.
- **In absence of EU policies recognising the role of probiotic and the appropriate EU regulatory framework**, Member States have adopted divergent national rules, resulting in:

Consumer confusion.

Barriers to internal market trade and regulatory friction.



Significant uncertainty for food and supplement producers.

Weak incentives for research, investment, and innovation.

- **European companies face regulatory barriers that slow innovation and limit public-health benefits. This stands in sharp contrast to global practice,** where jurisdictions including the US, Canada, and several Asian markets have implemented clear probiotic definitions, labelling rules, and claim frameworks.

Consumer demand for clarity is high:

79% of the consumers want clear label on probiotic food and food suppelments

57% do not feel well informed that a food product contains probiotics

Source: 3GEM survey commissioned by IPA Europe from a representative sample of 8.000 consumers in 8 European countries

3 The Value of Probiotics for Public Health and the Potential Health Care Saving for the EU

The SEA quantifies the impact of probiotic use in **seven key health domains** supported by robust scientific evidence:

1

Restoring gut microbiota after antibiotic use:

probiotics can reduce antibiotic-associated diarrhoea (AAD) by **up to 37% in adults and 53% in children**, potential annual savings of **€5.9-€8.5 billion** in healthcare costs.

2

Supporting respiratory tract health:

For each 1% improvement in respiratoty health through probiotic use, the EU could save **€1.2-€4.1 billion** in yearly savings by reducing infections, medical visits and productivity losses.

3

Maintaining and improving oral health:

Probiotics help reduce plaque, gum inflammation, and periodontal disease. For each 1% improvement in oral health through probiotic use, the EU could save. **€1.4–€1.9 billion** annually.

4

Improving women's health:

By supporting balanced vaginal microbiota and preventing bacterial vaginosis and recurrent infections, probiotics could reduce EU healthcare costs by **€1.9–€3.9 billion** each year.

5

Improving lactose digestion:

Probiotic strains with lactase activity can alleviate lactose intolerance symptoms by **up to 50%**, potentially saving **€7.0–€9.5 billion** annually through improved dietary tolerance and reduced medical use.

6

Supporting mental well-being via the gut–brain axis:

Evidence shows probiotics can reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms. Recognising these benefits could lead to **up to €5.9 billion** in yearly savings.

7

Maintaining normal bowel function:

Probiotics improve constipation and transit time, particularly in older adults, generating up to **€1.4 billion** in annual savings and improving quality of life.

All together, these effects translate into **at least €10 billion in potential yearly savings for EU healthcare systems**, while also delivering meaningful improvements in citizens' quality of life and economic productivity.

4 The EU Opportunity: Probiotics Directly Support Several Core EU policy Priorities

Probiotics, directly support several core EU policy priorities:

Biotech and Life Sciences Strategy

Probiotics represent immediately deployable microbiome innovation, ready to translate scientific advances into real-world health benefits.

Microbiome and One Health initiatives

Probiotics provide a practical, evidence-based tool for improving microbiome balance and supporting preventiv health across populations.

Healthy Food and Nutrition Policy Agenda

When incorporated into foods and supplements, probiotics contribute to healthier diets and more resilient public health outcomes.

Probiotics offer a unique opportunity for Europe to advance its **public health**, **sustainability**, and **innovation** objectives, bringing microbiome into everyday, accessible solutions for citizens.

A fundamental question remains: how can Europe claim global leadership in microbiome science if it cannot regulate its most established and widely used microbiome-based tool?

5 Policy Recommendations and Call to Action

To unlock the health, economic, and innovation potential of probiotics, the EU should:

- **Embed probiotics across EU health, nutrition, research, and biotech strategies,** ensuring coherence with the EU's microbiome and life sciences agendas.
- **Enable transparent, science-based labelling,** including permitting the term "contains probiotics" where supported by evidence.
- **Establish an EU-wide definition of "probiotics",** adopting a harmonised approach consistent with WHO/FAO guidance.
- **Create a proportionate, innovation-friendly regulatory pathway,** allowing prevention -related claims when justified by robust scientific data.
- **Strengthen preventive health policy,** recognising the role of probiotics in public health promotion and in reducing antimicrobial resistance.

Europe's ambition to lead in microbiome science is held back by the regulatory gaps and lack of recognition.

The question for the EU is no longer whether probiotics matter - science and consumer demand show they do. The question is whether the EU is ready to provide a clear and predictable framework that turns scientific progress into real-world benefits, strengthens consumer confidence, drives innovation, and supports prevention.