



ANR INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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## **‘Vitamin D mushrooms’ – a food-based solution to Aussies’ vitamin D deficiency: world-first research**

**Leah Bramich,  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Mushroom Growers Association (AMGA)**



### **GRAB A**

**What is the role of the Australian Mushroom Growers Association (AMGA), how many mushroom growers are there in Australia, & where are they based?**

So the Australian Mushroom Growers Association primarily supports growers of *Agaricus Bisporus*, which is your little Button, your Cup and Flat, and the Swiss Brown and Portobello. They're all the same variety of mushrooms.

There are 43 growers of *Agaricus Bisporus* here in Australia, ah, primarily in the Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales States, closely followed by Queensland and Western Australia.

### **GRAB B**

**What is the most widely consumed mushroom in Australia?**

Ninety-five per cent of the mushrooms that are consumed in Australia is the white mushroom Cup, which is your medium-sized, common white mushroom that you purchase from supermarkets.

### **GRAB C**

**What are the health benefits of eating mushrooms?**

Well, mushrooms being not a plant, not a vegetable, and being fungi, have a really unique combination of vitamins and minerals, which really do make them a nutritional powerhouse. So, all you need to remember is that mushrooms have A, B, C, and D – antioxidants, which is really good for your body; beta-glucan, which is good for lowering blood cholesterol; chitin, which is good for your tummy; and perhaps the most exciting vitamin of all, is the mushroom's ability to produce vitamin D.

## **GRAB D**

### **What are the major findings of the new nutrition research AMGA has completed with FOODiQ Global?**

The recent nutrition research which we've completed with FOODiQ Global, is truly exciting, because what they've been able to show is that mushrooms have an ability to produce vitamin D if you just pop

them out in the sun for 15 minutes. This is really important, because one in four Australians are actually vitamin D deficient, and that number actually increases during the winter months.

Through the dietary modelling that FOODiQ have performed, they've been able to show that just 75 grams of mushrooms, or three little white Cup mushrooms, consumed four times a week, can provide the average Australian adult with a hundred per cent of their vitamin D needs.

## **GRAB E**

### **What is your message to Australian adults regarding vitamin D supplementation & mushrooms?**

Aussies spend so much money on vitamin D supplements per year, when all they need to do is eat mushrooms!

## **GRAB F**

### **How are mushrooms classified?**

So under the current Australian dietary guidelines, mushrooms are listed in the vegetable category, but they're not a vegetable, they're not a plant. They're biologically different to plants, being fungi.

So we believe that mushrooms should be separated from a biological perspective, but also to be highlighted for the unique combination of macro and micronutrients, which are just not available in ordinary fruits and vegetables.

## **GRAB G**

### **What certification programs must commercial mushroom growers supplying major retailers and independent supermarkets comply with?**

Commercial mushroom growers and other food producers that supply major retailers and independent supermarkets must comply with global standards of food safety. Now these certification programs include rigorous record keeping on farm, strict safety protocols on farm, testing of both farm and product, and growers are also subject to snap auditing processes as well. So these protocols need to be, ah, very strict protocols on farm, that are part of their ongoing, year-round processes.

Now this is a good thing for Australian consumers, because they can be assured that the product that they're buying from major retailers and independent supermarkets, is safe, and of the highest quality.

## **GRAB H**

### **What is your message to consumers regarding the safety of mushrooms?**

Be confident in the mushrooms that you buy from the local supermarket, because they undergo global standards of food safety certification, and they are safe to eat, and of the highest quality.

**Dr Flávia Fayet-Moore**  
**Nutrition Scientist, Space Nutritionist &**  
**CEO, FOODiQ Global**



**GRAB A**

**What was the major finding of your new, dietary modelling research?**

So the current dietary guidelines in Australia is actually inadequate in vitamin D. So we asked the question, what would happen to the diet if we added vitamin D mushrooms to the vegetables food group? And we found that we were able to meet the vitamin D intake of all Australians with just four serves a week of vitamin D mushrooms, without adding any excess calories, and helping reduce sodium intakes.

**GRAB B**

**Why is vitamin D so important?**

Vitamin D is essential for bone health. It helps with calcium reabsorption from the diet that helps deposit in our bones and make them really strong. But there's so much epidemiological evidence of populations around the world, where having low vitamin D status results in higher risk of infectious disease, of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome, and cancers.

**GRAB C**

**How many Australians are vitamin D deficient?**

In Australia, almost one in three Australians are vitamin D deficient. So that's levels under 50 micromoles per litre. Around the world, on average, one in two people are vitamin D deficient. It's a big problem, and we need to find a solution for it.

**GRAB D**

**How many Australians are getting inadequate vitamin D from their diet?**

Ninety- per cent of Australians get inadequate vitamin D from their diet, which is not surprising, because there's so few food sources of vitamin D. So, if you're not getting it from the sun, and you're not eating many eggs or fish, then you probably need to be supplemented with vitamin D.

**GRAB E**

**How have global dietary guidelines successfully met a person's vitamin D requirements to date?**

All the guidelines around the world are inadequate in meeting vitamin D needs, because most of them assume that we're going to be getting from our sun. But we know that there's many restrictions on how much sun exposure you can get, from cancer risk, to spending time indoors all day, or to your skin colour, because if your skin colour is very dark, you actually naturally block the UV, and don't produce vitamin D. And the guidelines have tried to increase fish intake, to increase egg intake, to model fortified foods, to try to meet those dietary vitamin D requirements. And all of them have been unsuccessful to date.

**GRAB F**

**What are 'vitamin D mushrooms'?**

It's just your common Button mushrooms, Swiss brown, Portobello, Flat that you buy in a supermarket. If you put them in the sun for about 15 minutes, it'll produce more than a hundred per cent of the requirement for every single Australian.

## **GRAB G**

### **How can vitamin D mushrooms help solve our nation's vitamin D deficiency?**

Mushrooms that have vitamin D, that have been exposed to UV light, not only have a large amount of vitamin D, but research shows that it can actually increase vitamin D levels in the blood. So it's a really nice addition to solving the vitamin D deficiency problem in Australia.

And from the research that exists, it's as effective as a vitamin D supplement, in increasing vitamin D levels in the blood.

## **GRAB H**

### **What is your message to the policy makers who are revising the dietary guidelines?**

My message for policymakers and the people revising the dietary guidelines, is to remember to consider UV-exposed mushrooms, or vitamin D mushrooms, because they provide a food-based solution, that has nutritional benefits, health benefits, culinary benefits, that can actually meet the targets of vitamin D requirements in Australia, and address the public health issue of one in three Australians being vitamin D deficient.

**Chris Tolson**  
**General Manager, Premier Mushrooms,**  
**The Hawkesbury Valley**



**GRAB A**

**How many tonnes of mushrooms does your farm produce each week?**

The site I'm standing on currently produces about 30 tonnes of mushrooms per week. That's the equivalent of one semi-trailer a night.

The White Prince Group produces about 220 tonnes of mushrooms per week. That's roughly seven semi-trailers of mushrooms a night. So quite a reasonable size operation.

**GRAB B**

**How and where are mushrooms grown?**

Mushrooms are grown right around Australia on vertical farming systems. Ah, this allows to have a lower environmental impact, using less land space. Ah, being indoors also allows us to control the three key points for mushroom growing, which is moisture, airflow, and air temperature.

**GRAB C**

**Can you share some interesting facts about mushrooms?**

A mushroom is able to double in size in 24 hours. A mushroom is approximately 90 per cent water. And a mushroom's gills are actually pink as it's growing, not brown.

**GRAB D**

**How do mushrooms generate vitamin D?**

Mushrooms have the unique ability to generate vitamin D. This can be done by exposing them to sunlight for 15 minutes, or buying specially marked packs already super-charged with vitamin D from your local retailer.

**GRAB E**

**How long do vitamin D mushrooms last in the fridge?**

Mushrooms having been exposed to the sun to super-charge with vitamin D, still are able to last well over a week in the fridge.

**GRAB F**

**How do you prepare mushrooms for consumption?**

Mushrooms are safe, ready to eat, out of the box, both raw or cooked. There is no need to wash or peel.

**ends#**