Consumers and the Food Transition

100 year - Conference
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Gert Spaargaren
Environmental Policy Group
Wageningen University
The Netherlands
The role of consumers in food systems of the future

- Food and Sustainability: pressing concerns
- The ‘transition’ of the food-system: what role for consumers?
- Direct and indirect environmental impact: on ‘doing your bit’
- Changing consumer behaviours: nudging and more
Food and sustainability

>1920's/1960's: Organic Food system as Alternative System
  - Organic and Mainstream ‘Opposing Paradigms’
  - Pesticide use and Fertilizers as most visible difference

> 2000: Mainstream Food System ‘engaging’ with Sustainable Food
  - Sustainable /Smart/ Climate/Precision Agriculture
  - Food labelling and certification in globalizing food chains

>2015 (Paris Agreement): Food System under Climate Pressure:
  - Climate Change brings the need for a ‘Radical Transition’
  - Sustainability of Food decisive for future of the system

Sustainability as multi-dimensional driver for change
Most pressing concerns for future Food Systems?

(pick the TWO DIMENSIONS that are the most important for you)

1) Safe food
2) Organic/ ‘biological’ food (no pesticides, no GMO)
3) Less food waste
4) Healthy food: (salt and sugar; obesity)
5) Fair-Trade food
6) Food and Ecosystem-sustainability (biodiversity/water)
7) Food and animal well being
8) Low Carbon Food (Climate Change)
9) Other, ...............................
The ‘transition’ of the food systems: What role for consumers?

- Sustainability of food as main goal/direction
- Time horizon: 2020 – 2030 – 2050
- Social and Technical aspects involved (products and lifestyles)
- All actors of the Globalizing Food Chains involved
- What role for Citizen-Consumers?
Food Practices in Transition
Changing Food Consumption, Retail and Production in the Age of Reflexive Modernity
Edited by Gert Spaargaren, Peter Oosterveer and Anne Loeber
Why do consumption practices matter?

- Since the ‘Consumerist Turn’, consumption (co) defines what happens with food systems overall.

- Consumers are lead actors in food-matters that are under their own control (where to shop, what to buy, which restaurant to pick, what to eat, etc.).

- Consumers co-decide about matters that are decided upon higher-up in food chains (using the labels; boy- and boycotting products, etc.).
Direct and Indirect Impact: on ‘doing your bit’

FLOWS OF POWER AND INFORMATION

- Disposal
- Use
- Access
- Provisioning
- Production
- Design

direct impacts on the environment
indirect impacts on the environment
Direct and Indirect Impact: on ‘doing your bit’...
1: Pro=providers first
2: cc= citizen-consumers first;
3: procc=equally responsible

- Salt, Suger, Fat
- Food-Wastes
- CO2-emission
- Animal Well-being
Changing consumer behaviours: about ‘nudging’ and more
Carbon Label in canteen of WUR

experiment: 3 periods of 6 weeks (2010 -2011)

Period I: no intervention

Period II: only black and white Carbon label

Menu's + Pillar with scores

Period III: colored label ‘plus’

Milk 390 gram CO₂ per portion

Menu suggestion

Contributions to CO₂ emissions of products

Beef is associated with higher CO₂ emissions than pork and poultry

grams CO₂ equivalents: 100 grams products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>CO₂ emissions (g CO₂-eq/t)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pillar with scores

EET KLYAATVRIENDLJUK
How many consumers shifted towards a lower carbon lunch after the interventions?

Option I: 0 – 5%
Option II: 5 – 25%
Option III: 25 – 50%
Option IV: > 50%
Why is it so difficult to change everyday behavioural routines?

Focus group with regular visitors afterwards to find out why

- Carbon Impact of (canteen)food underestimated
- Carbon label not noticed/used since carbon labels not (yet)widely available in canteens, supermarkets etc.
- Food-assortment of canteen not enough green/low carbon
- Interventions did not fit the present routine of having lunch: time is scarce; rushing to the check-out
Without some form of engagement of consumers, the transition towards more sustainable food-systems will be more difficult to achieve.

The greening of consumption practices is the shared responsibility of consumers and providers.

Behavioural routines are robust/ not easy to change.