

Narrowing gap in public health nutrition and food policy: The case of sustainable diets

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1. The problem: policy-reality mismatch and distortion

- The idea of DGs or FBDGs
 - Set benchmarks for public and supply chains
- Not working:
 - Public is not following them
 - Food industry → ‘ultra-processed’ non-food foods
- DGs / FBDGs ignore environmental impacts
 - These are huge
- Policy-makers do not seem to care!
 - Policy – reality mismatch

2. Reasons for this problem

- It's so huge!
 - Problem of **Complexity**
- To address it means changing the food system + consuming culture
 - Problem of defining **Progress**
- No-one is championing the problem
 - Problem of lack of **Policy Coherence**
- Nutrition science is fragmented:
 - life sciences vs social vs environmental
 - Problem of **Fragmented Science**

3. Possible changes to narrow the gap

- a) new EU, national and local Sustainable Dietary Guidelines (SDGs)
- b) Metrics for a good food system & infrastructure
- c) Improved links between public health and environmental health = ‘ecological public health nutrition’
- d) Organisational coalitions to campaign
- e) Environmental teaching in professions

4. Interventions & policy efforts

- *International experience of pushing for formal SDGs;*
 - Sweden (2008-15): rule anti Market by EFSA
 - UK (2008-10): abolished by new Govt
 - Australia (2010-12): beaten by meat lobby
 - USA (2014-15): beaten by meat lobby

4. Interventions (cont)

- *Experience of softer SustDiet advice:*
 - Germany CSD (3rd edition)
 - Expanded with each new edition
 - Logo based
 - UK carbon label:
 - Carbon Trust + PepsiCo – crisps
 - withdrawn
 - NL science committee –
 - Strong advice but uncertain central policy impact

4. Interventions (cont.)

- *Experience of civil society*
 - WWF One Planet Living / Livewell Plate
 - UK → Spain, Fr, S → global
 - Eating Better UK Coalition
 - 45 national organisations
 - Lifestyle experiments:
 - Vancouver 100 Mile Diet / Fife Diet
 - Driven by localism rather than hard data
 - Socially very interesting

5. Lessons learned

- Awareness is growing:
 - Rise of interest in Ecological Public Health
- Campaigns are growing:
 - ‘below radar’ allies: NGOs, industry (bits), science
 - Milan Urban Food Policy Pact commits to SDG
www.foodpolicymilan.org
- Data on case for change grow but no extensive change occurring ... yet
- Will it need a crisis?
 - We have one already but it’s a **quiet crisis**

Conclusions

- Optimism (despite sober indicators)
- Democratic experimentation is underway
- Food is complex (so what is new?)
- Inter-disciplinary indicators & research needed
- Sustainability cannot be achieved cheap
- This cannot be resolved incrementally
- It's system change