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SOCIO-ECONOMIC BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DIETS IN EUROPE

Commissioned report

Socio-economic barriers and opportunities for sustainable diets in Europe

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Background and approach

The Live Well for LIFE project team commissioned Sue Dibb as a consultant to support its work to identify the socio-economic barriers and opportunities for sustainable diets in Europe.

Specifically this work has involved:

- Undertaking a literature review on existing socio-economic evidence relating to barriers and opportunities of sustainable diets in Europe
- Analysing the outputs of the one to one meetings with stakeholders interviewed in Sweden, Spain and France – the project's pilot countries
- Summarising the findings in this draft report

Literature Review:

The literature review draws on knowledge of existing sources and targeted literature searches to identify recent relevant academic papers. This was supplemented by internet searches for latest information published by relevant government/international bodies, business organisations and civil society groups. Given the limited time available for this work, this is not a full literature review.

Stakeholder views:

The literature review is supplemented by the views of stakeholders. A LiveWell stakeholder workshop (September 2012)¹ identified a number of themes relating to barriers and opportunities. With the help of help of its offices in the pilot countries, the LiveWell for LIFE team conducted a stakeholder analysis of key organisations to work with on the development and testing of sustainable diets. Based on this analysis, 15-20 organisations across the three pilot countries were selected to be consulted on what they perceive as their barriers and opportunities of a future in which European consumers follow sustainable diets. Face to face stakeholder interviews were conducted November & December 2012 (Spain and Sweden). Questionnaires were sent to French stakeholders in January 2013.

This reports identifies a range of opportunities and barriers for sustainable diets in Europe. It distinguishes opportunities and barriers as they relate to three key interest groups

- people
- policy makers
- businesses

This approach recognises that these broad groups of stakeholders will experience opportunities and face barriers in ways that reflect their respective roles. It draws on the Triangle of Change Model of behaviour change towards sustainable consumption.² This identifies the important roles for policy makers, business and people/civil society to work together in synergy to enable the transition towards sustainable consumption. The Triangle of Change approach recognises that all have a role to play – dependent on what each is best able and best placed to deliver. Policymakers, for example, are best placed to deliver regulatory frameworks and incentives while removing barriers. Businesses can develop and market more sustainable products and services. And while people can enact their personal responsibility, both policy makers and business have an important role in helping make sustainable choices easier for people.

This report identifies key opportunities and barriers identified in the literature and distinguishes these as they relate to three key interest groups: people, policy makers and business. The table below categorises the opportunities and barriers that have been identified. Each opportunity and barrier is

¹ LiveWell stakeholder workshop: Session III: Barriers and opportunities for adoption LiveWell Plate diets: 18th September 2012, Bibliotheque Solvay, Brussels.

² Sustainable Development Commission/National Consumer Council (2006) *I Will If You Will: Towards sustainable consumption*, Report of the UK Sustainable Consumption Roundtable.

discussed in the report. This identifies the evidence from the literature review and identifies relevant stakeholder views from the interviews conducted in Sweden and Spain.

Table 1: Summary of Socio-economic opportunities and barriers for sustainable diets in Europe

	Opportunities	Barriers
People	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interest in sustainable food is growing 2. Models of sustainable diets already exist 3. Interest in health provides an opportunity 4. Opportunities for saving money 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Limited knowledge/confusion 6. Habits 7. Costs 8. Cultural/gender issues 9. Time & lifestyle barriers 10. Access
Policy makers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Policy wins (including public health, climate change, food security and environmental goals) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Focus on food production not consumption 13. Economic climate 14. Institutional barriers 15. Reluctance to engage in behaviour change policies
Business	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Meeting societies expectations 17. European policy 18. Business opportunities to shape consumer choices 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. Influencing consumers 20. Supply-side challenges 21. Policy framework challenge 22. Lack of authoritative definition of sustainable diets

Socio-economic opportunities and barriers for sustainable diets in Europe.

This section identifies the socio-economic opportunities and barriers for sustainable diets in Europe as they relate to the three sectors of people, policy makers (institutions) and businesses.

People: Opportunities

Individual consumers are able to modify their food choices towards healthy, sustainable diets. This section identifies the key opportunities and barriers towards such behaviour change. There are questions as to how far consumers acting individually can bring about the kind of transformation in diets that is needed towards sustainable food consumption. Both business and policymakers have a role in making sustainable choices easier for people.³ Opportunities for policy makers and businesses to enable consumers to make healthy, sustainable choices more easily are identified in the following sections.

The literature review and stakeholder interviews identified a number of opportunities to support behaviour change towards healthy, sustainable diets.

Interest in sustainable food is growing

Many consumers report positive feelings towards sustainable food⁴. Trends towards reconnection between farmers and consumers, support for local food and for national production (particularly for meat) have been identified. Interest in organic and fairly traded food has increased among a group of 'concerned consumers'⁵. European consumers identify a range of ethical and sustainability concerns, most commonly the use of hormones and antibiotics in meat production; other animal welfare issues: the carbon cost of transporting food; the impact of food production on the landscape; other environmental effects of food production; and fair treatment of farmers.⁶

The Barilla Institute identifies the rise of the 'responsible consumer'⁷ and what it terms ConsumerActors – consumers who want to be involved in the process which creates the food product, sometimes gathering together into purchasing groups (so called co-producers). In order to meet the dietary and nutritional needs of a world that is more affluent, more urbanized, and with a growing population, the report argues, people's dietary habits will have to undergo radical transformations, requiring them to forgo the attitude of avoiding responsibilities that is typical of the post-modern consumer.

An openness to the idea of changing their diets among a significant proportion of consumers has been identified. For example UK government research found that 62% of respondents were very or fairly willing to give up red meat, whilst 36% were very or fairly willing to give up dairy⁸. Dutch research has identified a growing interest in flexitarian eating (eating meat less often).⁹ The following quote illustrates the opportunities available.

³ UK Sustainable Development Commission (2011) Making Sustainable Lives Easier: A Priority for Governments, Business and Society <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/MakingSustainableLivesEasier.pdf>

⁴ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

⁵ Videira N et al (2012) Background paper on Sustainable Food Consumption and Growth. 1st Multinational knowledge brokerage event on Sustainable Food Consumption <http://www.scp-responder.eu/pdf/knowledge/papers/RESPONDER%20Food1%20-%20Background%20Paper.pdf>

⁶ Stockley, L (2011) Foresight Project on Global Food and Farming Futures WP2: review of levers for changing consumers' food patterns. Government Office for Science, London. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/food-and-farming/additional-reviews/11-598-wp2-review-levers-for-consumers-food-patterns.pdf>

⁷ Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition (2012) Eating in 2030: trends and perspectives http://www.barillacfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/alimentazione_2030_eng.pdf

⁸ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, (2011) Attitudes and Behaviours around Sustainable Food Purchasing <http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/files/defra-stats-foodfarm-food-attitudes-report-110406-mainreport.pdf>

⁹ de Bakker E, Dagevos H (2012) Reducing meat consumption in today's consumer society: questioning the citizen-consumer gap. J Agric Environ Ethics 25:877-894

'There is increasing societal awareness of the opportunities to improve the quality of life through healthy eating and of the contribution that sustainable production can make to improvement of the overall environment. The preferences of consumers for quality, convenience, diversity and health and their expectations of safety, ethics and sustainable food production serve to highlight the opportunities for innovation.' Italian Food for Life¹⁰

Positive attitudes (towards healthy, sustainable diets) do not always translate into behaviour change. There is a gap between what people think, feel and say on the one hand, and what they do on the other hand.¹¹ This knowledge/behaviour gap is explored further below.

Nonetheless trends indicate that diets have changed considerably over last 50 years indicating that our food habits are open to changing over time. The challenge is encouraging change in the direction towards healthy, sustainable diets rather than the trends towards unhealthy diets and wasteful over-consumption.

Stakeholder views:

Local food

Stakeholders at the LiveWell for Life workshop in September 2012 identified interest in local food as an opportunity. They also identified the need to go beyond the approach of simply informing consumers, to facilitate behavioural change by providing practical enabling conditions to support consumers to make healthier, sustainable choices. One example provided is the need to make good food appealing and trendy.

COAG (Spain) saw opportunities in supporting and promoting local and short supply chains.

Coop Agro (Spain) saw opportunities for local food.

CECU (Spain) highlighted the growing number of people considering quality and are willing to pay more for it. There are also opportunities for people who are building cooperatives with local farmers due to high food prices for consumers and low prices for farmers.

Models of sustainable diets already exist

Within the diversity of diets that are consumed throughout European countries there are already diets that better meet the goals of healthy, sustainable diets than others. These diets illustrate some of the ways in which others may be encouraged to consumer healthier, sustainable diets.

For example, German research¹² has shown that within one society distinct diet profiles with markedly different environmental impacts (more sustainable/lower GHG) are already established. While the vegan and vegetarian diets studied had the least impacts, the two diets based on nutritional guidelines still provided significant benefits. The authors conclude that these differences could be seen as offering potential opportunities to strengthen more sustainable nutrition patterns and offer practicable opportunities to reduce environmental impacts on a low cost basis.

Stakeholder views:

Stakeholders at the LiveWell for Life workshop in September 2012 raised this topic and asked for further research to understand the extent to which LiveWell diets are already followed and what is known

¹⁰ Rossi D, Sustainability and Diversity Along the Food Chain in Sustainable Diets and Biodiversity, Directions and Solutions for Policy, Research and Action, FAO/Bioversity International, FAO 2012
http://www.bioversityinternational.org/fileadmin/bioversity/publications/pdfs/1539_Sustainable_diets_and_biodiversity_Final_13July2012.pdf?cache=1342541455

¹¹ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

¹² Meier, T., Christen, O. (2012): Environmental impacts of dietary recommendations and dietary styles: Germany as an example. Journal of Environmental Science & Technology.
<http://www.nutrition-impacts.org/media/2012 - Meier, Christen - LCA of dietary recommendations and styles.pdf>

about the people who are following them. It was felt that there were good examples already in existence which need to be scaled up.

La Paz Hospital (Spain) saw opportunities in regional diets eg the Atlantic diet in northern Spain which includes lots of fish.

ICA retailer (Sweden) considered there were opportunities for promoting the Nordic Diet (eat more berries, fruit and veg, nuts, grains and shellfish and restrict red meat). This has been reviewed by experts and made environmentally friendly. The 'One Tonne Life' (referring to GHG emissions) showed it was possible to reduce emissions from 7 – 1.5 tonnes though the diet needed to be vegan. Considered there are opportunities to look at vegetarian diets and add a bit of meat rather than focusing on meat menus and adding more vegetables.

Stakeholder views:

CECU (Spain) noted that in Spain there is still a good memory of what good is eg my grandma's dish.

There are opportunities in continuing to use this cultural heritage while there is still time.

The Mediterranean diet was mentioned by a number of stakeholder in Spain as providing opportunities for healthier, sustainable diets.

MAGRAMA (Spain) was concerned that a focus on Mediterranean diets was too narrow a focus for the entire lifestyle change that is required.

Interest in health provides an opportunity

The public's knowledge and interest in health and healthy eating provides a further opportunity for sustainable diets. Increased health awareness, healthy lifestyles and overall well-being have become a societal and economic megatrend.¹³

Health is a motivator for behaviour change – higher than concern about the environment. UK Government research into consumer attitudes and behaviour around sustainable food¹⁴ found health most important factor for consumers (81%). Environmental sustainability was the least important. It was of concern to only 26% concerned consumers. A study of consumers in EU27 countries also identified the importance of health over environmental concerns for consumer food choices. 32% of people said they would like to buy meat or meat products less often. The main reason given was for health (54%) compared to 16% for environmental reasons¹⁵.

There are opportunities for win-wins for health and environment in this health transition¹⁶ from diet rich in animal protein to a diet that is close to health guidelines and at the same time puts less pressure on the environment. A focus on health benefits is likely to appeal to a wider range of people than focusing on environmental concerns.

Stakeholder views:

Coop Agro (Spain) saw opportunities for promoting the Mediterranean diet via communication with children. Education will be key and the Livewell Plate can support this.

Spanish Heart Foundation (Spain) saw the Mediterranean diet (and regional variations) providing an opportunity for education in schools including cooking classes and working with chefs. It is important to involve children to spread messages.

¹³ Videira N et al (2012) Background paper on Sustainable Food Consumption and Growth. 1st Multinational knowledge brokerage event on Sustainable Food Consumption

<http://www.scp-responder.eu/pdf/knowledge/papers/RESPONDER%20Food1%20-%20Background%20Paper.pdf>

¹⁴ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, (2011) Attitudes and Behaviours around Sustainable Food Purchasing <http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/files/defra-stats-foodfarm-food-attitudes-report-110406-mainreport.pdf>

¹⁵ European Commission (2012) Functioning of the Meat Market, Consumer Survey
[http://www.llkc.lv/upload_file/401466/Paulina%20Gbur_Outcomes_Kaunas%20\[Read-Only\]%20\[Compatibility%20Mode\].pdf](http://www.llkc.lv/upload_file/401466/Paulina%20Gbur_Outcomes_Kaunas%20[Read-Only]%20[Compatibility%20Mode].pdf)

¹⁶ Videira N et al (2012) Background paper on Sustainable Food Consumption and Growth. 1st Multinational knowledge brokerage event on Sustainable Food Consumption
<http://www.scp-responder.eu/pdf/knowledge/papers/RESPONDER%20Food1%20-%20Background%20Paper.pdf>

Swedish Ministry of Rural Affairs (Sweden) Health and environmental choices go well together – there is a synergy.

Opportunities for saving money

Cost is an important factor in shaping consumers food choices. This is particularly relevant currently due to the financial downturn facing many European countries. Healthier more sustainable diets can, or are perceived to, cost consumers more. This barrier is discussed further below. However many elements of a healthy sustainable diet can cost less eg vegetarian, reduced meat diets, consumption that is less wasteful and based around smaller portion sizes can cost less.

German research¹⁷ shows that diet shifts offer practicable opportunities to reduce environmental impacts on a low cost basis. Research by Jennie Macdiarmid and colleagues in Scotland¹⁸ found that it was possible to achieve an acceptable healthy diet alongside reduction in GHG impacts (36%) by reducing, though not eliminating meat at a comparable cost to average UK expenditure on food.

Research for the Livewell diet has demonstrated that a healthy sustainable diet does not necessarily cost more than the existing diet.¹⁹

Stakeholder views

Stakeholders at the LiveWell for Life workshop in September 2012 identified that a Livewell Diet was no more expensive and ideally cheaper.

ICA retailer (Sweden) saw opportunities in the trend towards less eating out and more eating in (cocooning) for cooking low priced and healthy foods. ‘We can’t make healthy sustainable food too costly – it has to be affordable’. There are also opportunities for better quality meat in smaller portions.

Swedish Ministry of Rural Affairs (Sweden). Price may be a tool/message for change as food prices and demand continue to rise

People: Barriers

The literature reviewed for this report provides extensive evidence of the barriers to changing consumption patterns towards healthy, sustainable diets in the context of behaviour change. Drawing on a wide range of research towards general attitudes, opportunities and barriers to change in relation to consumers choosing a sustainable diet, a paper for the UK Government Foresight Project on Food and Farming Futures concludes: ‘there is a growing literature on the attitudes of consumers to moving towards a more sustainable lifestyle, of which eating is only one aspect. It is noticeable that many of the papers identify more barriers than opportunities.’²⁰

The barriers that people face can be distinguished as *individual* (internal) barriers eg socio-psychological factors, physiological characteristics and demographic barriers and *societal* (external) barriers eg infrastructure, cultural, economic and institutional barriers.²¹

¹⁷ Meyer T & Christen O (2012) Environmental Impacts of Dietary Recommendations and Dietary Styles: Germany As an Example, Journal of Environmental Science & Technology <http://www.nutrition-impacts.org/media/2012%20-%20Meier.%20Christen%20-%20LCA%20of%20dietary%20recommendations%20and%20styles.pdf>

¹⁸ Macdiarmid J et al (2012) Sustainable diets for the future: can we contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by eating a healthy diet? *Am J Clin Nutr* 96(3):632-9

¹⁹ Macdiarmid, J et al. (2011). Livewell: a balance of healthy and sustainable food choices. World Wildlife Fund UK. http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/livewell_report_jan11.pdf

²⁰ Stockley, L (2011) Foresight Project on Global Food and Farming Futures WP2: review of levers for changing consumers’ food patterns. Government Office for Science, London. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/food-and-farming/additional-reviews/11-598-wp2-review-levers-for-consumers-food-patterns.pdf>

²¹ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

Limited knowledge/confusion

Limited knowledge and confusion over what is sustainable and what is not is identified as a significant barrier within the literature.

There are many elements to people's lack of understanding towards priority elements of sustainable diets. For example, consumer research shows that decreased use of packaging is seen as the most important aspect of environmentally friendly food consumption, whereas lower meat consumption is seen to help the least.²² This can be compared to knowledge about the negative effects of unhealthy diets which is well understood in the Western world at least in general terms though consumers may still have difficulties determining which specific products are healthy and which are not.²³

While climate change remains a key concern for the European public²⁴ there is also widespread public confusion over climate change because of the uncertain way in which the media portrays it. Most people have only a vague understanding of the science, and believe it is inconsistent anyway. There is a specific lack of awareness and information on 'carbon footprints' of products.

As knowledge and awareness increases there is a downside for many consumers who experience increasing diet-related uncertainty and general disbelief regarding food information²⁵. There is evidence of considerable consumer confusion about 'green' terms such as organic, green, natural, and environmentally friendly. European wide consumer research shows that only a minority of EU citizens recognise logos of EU food quality assurance schemes²⁶. Just over one-third of EU citizens (36%) are aware of the non-EU Fairtrade logo, a quarter (24%) are aware of the EU's Organic farming logo and only a small minority are aware of logos symbolising the three elements of the EU's Protected Geographical Status scheme. Knowledge of these logos varies widely between Member States. In the United Kingdom, a large majority (86%) recognise at least one of the logos, compared with only one-third (34%) of respondents in Bulgaria and Poland.

Research by the UK consumer group Which? on sustainable food labeling concluded that many labels are not well known, poorly understood and on the whole do not help consumers understand how different aspects of sustainability have been addressed.²⁷

In her review of the literature for UK Foresight project²⁸, Lynn Stockly identifies 'little or confusing or contradictory information' as a barrier. Many consumers are uncertain and sceptical of green claims from industry, and do not know who to trust – Government, the media and celebrities are not particularly trusted either. This also confirms that people do not really understanding terms like carbon footprint. For some people, climate change is just seen as a 'fad'.

As food and diet are increasingly becoming the object of media attention, Claude Fischler of the Barilla Institute²⁹ believes 'there is information, but there's too much of it. And it's incoherent, cacophonous, and continuously changing'. This information is contradictory, he argues, because it comes from a

²² Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

²³ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

²⁴ European Commission (2011) Climate Change, Eurobarometer
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_372_en.pdf

²⁵ Videira N et al (2012) Background paper on Sustainable Food Consumption and Growth. 1st Multinational knowledge brokerage event on Sustainable Food Consumption

<http://www.scp-responder.eu/pdf/knowledge/papers/RESPONDER%20Food1%20-%20Background%20Paper.pdf>

²⁶ European Commission (2012) Europeans' attitudes towards food security, food quality and the countryside,

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_389_en.pdf

²⁷ Which? Report (2010) Making Sustainable Food Choices Easier.

²⁸ Stockley, L (2011) Foresight Project on Global Food and Farming Futures WP2: review of levers for changing consumers' food patterns. Government Office for Science, London.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/food-and-farming/additional-reviews/11-598-wp2-review-levers-for-consumers-food-patterns.pdf>

²⁹ Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition (2012) Eating in 2030: trends and perspectives

http://www.barillacfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/alimentazione_2030_eng.pdf

plethora of different sources, with advertising, internet blogs, and the innumerable television shows, books, and magazines providing advice on diet.

Some lack of knowledge and confusion may be justified. As Jennie Macdiarmid points out: 'The concept of a sustainable diet is not new but it is a complex issue, and there are still many gaps in our understanding of what a sustainable diet might comprise'.³⁰

The European Commission has recognized the challenge of communicating environmental performance of products. In a 2012 conference presentation, Jeroen Van Laer, from DG Health and Consumers³¹ recognised that sustainable food, is a new and complex area of information for consumers who suffer from information overload and a proliferation of labels. He also raised the issue of reliability of information and the lack of a 'meta-label' that would cover all sustainability aspects. Despite these shortcomings, he emphasized that information alone is insufficient to enable consumer behaviour change – there is a need for green choices to be easy and affordable choices.

This is particularly relevant for the many people, for whom sustainability is not a priority. The UK consumer body, Which? found that even people who say they are motivated to think about ethical and environmental issues when choosing food, still put it as a relatively low priority compared to other issues such as price, safety, taste/quality and healthy eating³². Environmental and ethical issues are rarely top of mind when shopping for food. Nearly half the people in Which? research said that there are too many things to think about already without worry about the environmental impact of the food they buy. The Barilla Institute has identified these 'indifferent' consumers as a function of a post modern society characterized by strong 'individualism' associated with abdication of responsibility.

Certainly many consumers feel alienated from the food chain, though 'a large minority' say they would like to address this by having more of a consumer voice on how food is produced.³³ Particularly in relation to climate change issues, many people report a lack of motivation and empowerment, feeling hopeless in relation to the massive size of the problem, and feeling that individual contributions are very small compared to the extent of e.g. carbon emissions by industry.³⁴

Stakeholder views:

MAGRAMA (Spain) considered there is low awareness among shoppers of healthy or sustainability messages. Education on food in schools and for parents is important. 'We lost connection with the countryside. Most people don't know the taste of a good potato.' Need to find creative ways of reconnecting people in urban areas to food production.

The Federation of Swedish Farmers (Sweden) believes education is important for changing attitudes and this needs to include using the media. People need basic information and understanding of how the system works. Education to school children is particularly important. The participant expressed the view that it should be made easy for consumers to choose. Ideally, all products should be produced in a resource efficient way to allow consumers to choose products that match their values. Choices mustn't be considered a burden or expensive otherwise there will be no change. Messages need to be positive.

³⁰ Macdiarmid J et al (2012) Sustainable diets for the future: can we contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by eating a healthy diet? Am J Clin Nutr 96:632-9. <http://asn-cdn-remembers.s3.amazonaws.com/e89816fd4d8082f49188cc118daacf7d.pdf>

³¹ Jeroen Van Laer, European Commission, DG Health and Consumers. Sustainable Food from a consumer policy perspective. Presentation to Responder workshop January 2012, Lisbon. http://www.scp-responder.eu/pdf/events/2012_lisbon/Jeroen%20Van%20Laer_Sustainable%20Food_Lisbon%2020120126.pdf

³² Which? Report (2010) Making Sustainable Food Choices Easier.

³³ Stockley, L (2011) Foresight Project on Global Food and Farming Futures WP2: review of levers for changing consumers' food patterns. Government Office for Science, London. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/food-and-farming/additional-reviews/11-598-wp2-review-levers-for-consumers-food-patterns.pdf>

³⁴ Stockley, L (2011) Foresight Project on Global Food and Farming Futures WP2: review of levers for changing consumers' food patterns. Government Office for Science, London. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/food-and-farming/additional-reviews/11-598-wp2-review-levers-for-consumers-food-patterns.pdf>

And we need to start now as it may take a generation to achieve change. 'Most people aren't aware of how their personal actions influence the environment and they don't know exactly what to do, compared to healthy eating. Climate is not on the mind of consumers.'

ICA retailer (Sweden) saw the discrepancy between knowledge and behaviour as a barrier and said that the lack of knowledge was not just among consumers, there was also lack of knowledge among politicians and it is important to education politicians, business, consumers and the media. Consumers have to understand and be brought in to the change we want but 'society needs to start by agreeing what we want'.

Swedish Consumer Protection Agency (Sweden) recognised the need to be careful in communicating messages to people. People care about themselves and their families rather than 'the world' and need to be shown the benefits ie health. There are opportunities for reducing waste (an easy win) and seasonal food as the food chain is picking it up. Less but better meat consumption and sustainable fish/seafood are also priority elements. 'GHG is a good place to start and measure but we need to be careful how this is communicated.'

Swedish Food Protection Agency (Sweden) 'Consumers have heard what to do but aren't sure. Sceptics have influenced dietary trends.' There is a lack of clear messages and trusted and liked champions.' Increased awareness among consumers is needed to that consumers understand that it is serious. It also need to simple to make better choices.

Swedish Ministry of Rural Affairs (Sweden) Change needs knowledge, information and good examples at to be at a personal level. Quoted example of Max, a fast food chain in Sweden, that labels GHG on every dish and is promoting 'less meat' burgers. Reducing food waste is also a good place to start as a 'door opener'. The gap between knowledge and behaviour is a barrier.

Spanish Heart Foundation (Spain). There is a need to help put knowledge which people have about healthy diets into practice.

Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Sweden) 'People don't want to be told what to do. As a consumer you want to feel its your choice.' It is difficult to communicate the 'less meat' message.

Habits are a barrier to behaviour change.

Habits are another factor that form a major barrier for behavior change.³⁵ Even with knowledge and motivation it can be difficult to change existing habits. Research has shown that when habits are strong, our behaviour is largely automatic and hence our intentions are poor predictors of behaviour.³⁶ UK Government research³⁷ found 'not chosen out of habit' as one of the two most cited barriers to sustainable food consumption (the other being 'too expensive').

Automatic, habitual daily patterns of food consumption helps explains the disconnection that can often be seen between people's values and attitudes and their behaviour ie the gap between what people say they value for example in relation to healthy, sustainable choices, and the reality of their purchases and consumption.

Consumers have many issues other than sustainability on their minds when they make trade-offs between the advantages and disadvantages of lifestyle and product choices.³⁸ The reason for this gap between what people think, feel and say (attitudes & values) on the one hand, and what they do on the other hand (behaviour) can be explained by the fact that food consumption is a daily routine. A change in attitude is not usually sufficient to change behaviour, but needs to be reinforced by other factors, price and other signals for example.³⁹

³⁵ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

³⁶ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

³⁷ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, (2011) Attitudes and Behaviours around Sustainable Food Purchasing <http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/files/defra-stats-foodfarm-food-attitudes-report-110406-mainreport.pdf>

³⁸ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

³⁹ Freibauer A et al (2011) Sustainable Food consumption and production in a resource-constrained world. Report European Commission – Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Brussels, European Commission DG Research and Innovation <http://ec.europa.eu/research/agriculture/conference/pdf/feg3-report-web-version.pdf>

The Barilla Institute⁴⁰ highlights the challenge over the next few decades to attempt to reduce the disparity between wanting to achieve a healthy diet and lifestyle, overcoming existing social and cultural systems, and actually managing to do so.

Habitual behaviour is an evolutionary advantage – we do not need to invest mental effort in routine decisions that have served us well in the past. It is also important to consider the significant influence of food processors, retailers and mass media on consumer choices.⁴¹

‘Overcoming problems of consumer lock-in, unfreezing old habits and forming new ones, understanding the complexity of the social logic in which individual behaviours are embedded: all these are pre-requisites for successful behaviour change initiatives.’⁴²

Habit is one factor among many that reinforce ‘lock-in’ to current lifestyle patterns. Economic constraints, institutional barriers, inequalities in access and social expectations can all be influential factors.⁴³ Where sustainable food choices are not the norm, successful behaviour change initiatives will need to make sustainable choices the default, easy choice. Changing habits takes an integrated approach in which downstream interventions (eg education) are combined with upstream interventions (eg changes in the context and the immediate consequences of behaviour).⁴⁴

Stakeholder views:

Coop Agro (Spain) mentioned people’s ‘lock-in’ to old behaviour and lack of education on food as barriers.

La Paz Hospital (Spain) thought that processed food seen as a ‘quick’ option was a barrier.

ICA retailer (Sweden) saw the ‘consumer mindset’ as a barrier eg to small portions, less food waste and shifting what they choose. ‘Changing eating habits is one of the most difficult to do. Education is the way forward.’

Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Sweden) saw education and knowledge as taking time to encourage change. ‘There is a big step from knowing to doing.’

Swedish Ministry of Rural Affairs (Sweden) It is difficult to change dietary habits.

Cost as a barrier

European consumers say price is the second most important consideration for them when shopping for food. 91% say it is important to them when buying food, though quality (96%) is the most important consideration.⁴⁵ Price is especially important for those citizens who have difficulties paying bills. Socio-economic status is an important factor in sustainable food choices.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition (2012) Eating in 2030: trends and perspectives

http://www.barillacfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/alimentazione_2030_eng.pdf

⁴¹ Freibauer A et al (2011) Sustainable Food consumption and production in a resource-constrained world. Report European Commission – Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Brussels, European Commission DG Research and Innovation

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/agriculture/conference/pdf/feg3-report-web-version.pdf>

⁴² Jackson, T. (2005). Motivating Sustainable Consumption – a review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change. Policy Studies Institute, p119 quoted in London. Freibauer A et al (2011) Sustainable Food consumption and production in a resource-constrained world. Report European Commission – Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Brussels, European Commission DG Research and Innovation

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/agriculture/conference/pdf/feg3-report-web-version.pdf>

⁴³ Stockley, L. (2011) Foresight Project on Global Food and Farming Futures WP2: review of levers for changing consumers’ food patterns. Government Office for Science, London.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/food-and-farming/additional-reviews/11-598-wp2-review-levers-for-consumers-food-patterns.pdf>

⁴⁴ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

⁴⁵ European Commission, Europeans’ attitudes towards food security, food quality and the countryside, Special Eurobarometer 389, 2012 http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_389_en.pdf

⁴⁶ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

UK Government research⁴⁷ found that 'too expensive' was one of two most cited barriers to sustainable food consumption (alongside habit). This was specifically mentioned in the context of choosing healthy diets. Healthy, sustainable products are typically seen as more expensive. This can act as a perceived barrier even when healthy, sustainable diets are cheaper or no more expensive than regular diets.

Research reliably shows that the diets of people on low incomes are less healthy than the diets of those with higher socio-economic status. Cost is a particularly important barrier for consumers on lower incomes who have less flexibility in their choices. More affluent consumers are able to adapt their diets while those on lower incomes find it harder for reasons including cost. For example, healthy diets can be more expensive as healthy products (eg fruit and vegetables) are more expensive than energy dense foods. Not only are junk foods cheaper, they are less likely to rise as a result of inflation meaning higher calorie, energy dense foods are the better bargain for cash-strapped shoppers.⁴⁸

Cost of food is a particularly strong factor determining food choices in the current economic crisis. The Mediterranean diet, recognized as one of the healthiest in the world, is reported to be under threat from the economic crisis facing much of Southern Europe⁴⁹. Research has found those on the lowest incomes are least likely to be following a Mediterranean diet and are more likely to be obese compared to those on higher incomes.

The Barilla Institute⁵⁰ highlights the importance of bringing greater awareness to people so that they can understand that it is possible to eat in a healthy way without spending a lot of money. There are currently no economic barriers to vegetarian and reduced animal protein diets as substitution products eg grains, vegetables and legumes are generally less expensive than meat.⁵¹

Stakeholder views:

The cost of healthy, sustainable diets, particularly for people on lower incomes was raised by stakeholders in the LiveWell workshop (2012). The view was expressed that Livewell Diet should not cost anymore and ideally be cheaper. It was acknowledged that income is a strong determinant for consumer choice.

Coop Agro (Spain) considered price is an important drive and recognized that it does not reflect the true price of food. Talked of 'incoherent behaviour' of consumers demanding quality food but low prices at the same time. Also noted that the reaction of farmers to low prices is to intensify production.

MAGRAMA (Spain): saw 'price, price & price' as key decision criteria for Spanish consumers. Quality and regional foods were also important.

The Federation of Swedish Farmers (Sweden) thought it important to convince consumers and retailers that they need to pay a bit more for Swedish products as Swedish agriculture is depressed.

Spanish Heart Foundation (Spain) Price is a barrier to consumers.

CECU (Spain) mentioned inequalities: 25% of children in Spain are underfed.

La Paz Hospital (Spain) saw healthy food perceived as expensive as a key barrier.

FITAG UGT (Spain) saw the problem of higher prices for more healthy food (eg fresh fruits and vegetables) compared to processed foods as a barrier.

ICA retailer (Sweden) saw price as a barrier. Retailers have tried to keep prices as low as possible to maintain competitive advantage though have agreed to higher prices to Swedish milk producers to ensure survival of food supply.

Swedish Ministry of Rural Affairs (Sweden) Price is a barrier

⁴⁷ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, (2011) Attitudes and Behaviours around Sustainable Food Purchasing <http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/files/defra-stats-foodfarm-food-attitudes-report-110406-mainreport.pdf>

⁴⁸ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

⁴⁹ [http://blog.euromonitor.com/2013/01/mediterranean-way-of-eating-under-threat.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+GlobalMarketResearch+\(Global+Market+Research+from+Euromonitor+International\)](http://blog.euromonitor.com/2013/01/mediterranean-way-of-eating-under-threat.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+GlobalMarketResearch+(Global+Market+Research+from+Euromonitor+International))

⁵⁰ Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition (2012) Eating in 2030: trends and perspectives

http://www.barillacfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/alimentazione_2030_eng.pdf

⁵¹ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

Cultural/gender issues

Cultural and gender issues may be important barriers especially when it comes to eating meat. Dutch researchers point out that meat is a vital part of culinary cultures in Western Europe and many people see meat as an essential part of a meal.⁵² Authors of the Protein Puzzle note that reductions in the consumption of livestock products has environmental and health benefits and is an easy and robust option, yet changing consumption patterns is a slow cultural process.⁵³

Gender is an important demographic factor associated with sustainable food choices⁵⁴. German research shows that average female diets are already closer to recommendations than men's.⁵⁵ Meat eating is traditionally associated with masculinity, though Dutch researchers indicate that there may be a shift taking place in the cultural image and appreciation of meat: that meat is less a token of masculinity as it is believed to be and that cultural values related to meat are slowly changing.⁵⁶ The authors have noted the increase in 'flexitarian' eating in the Netherlands – people who are consciously trying to limit their intake of meat.⁵⁷

Stakeholder views:

COAG (Spain) thought more people in Northern Europe were probably concerned about environmental issues.

Coop Agro (Spain) mentioned changes in consumption patterns reflecting increasing numbers of women working outside the home.

CECU (Spain) Women are still predominantly the food buyers in Spanish households, many over 50 and lowly educated.

MAGRAMA (Spain) noted the trends of more people living in urban areas, women not staying home to cook anymore and increasing number of immigrants.

La Paz Hospital (Spain) saw changed family structure, with women cooking less as an important barrier.

Time and lifestyle barriers

Research shows that sustainable consumption is negatively associated with perceived time barriers.⁵⁸ In the context of sustainable diets this includes time barriers to deciding on alternative recipes and the perception that vegetarian/reduced meat meals take more time than cooking 'regular' meat dishes.

Convenience has been a major trend driven by busy lifestyles, more women working outside the home, changes in household composition, increases in disposable income and revolutions in food processing.⁵⁹ Demographic trends including aging of the population, single-member nuclear families, immigration, the role of women are influential in food consumption trends.⁶⁰

⁵² De Bakker, E. & Dagevos, H. (2010). Meat lovers, meat reducers and meat avoiders: Sustainable protein consumption in a carnivorous food culture]. The Hague: LEI Wageningen UR.

⁵³ Westhoek, H. et al. (2011), The Protein Puzzle, The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency. www.pbl.nl/en

⁵⁴ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

⁵⁵ Meier T & Christen O (2012) Gender as a factor in an environmental assessment of the consumption of animal and plant-based foods in Germany, Int J Life Cycle Assess.

⁵⁶ de Bakker E, Dagevos H (2012) Reducing meat consumption in today's consumer society: questioning the citizen-consumer gap. J Agric Environ Ethics 25:877-894

⁵⁷ De Bakker, E. & Dagevos, H. (2010). Meat lovers, meat reducers and meat avoiders: Sustainable protein consumption in a carnivorous food culture]. The Hague: LEI Wageningen UR.

⁵⁸ Faber J et al (2012) Behavioural Climate Change Mitigation Options: Doman Report Food, CE Delft.

⁵⁹ Videira N et al (2012) Background paper on Sustainable Food Consumption and Growth. 1st Multinational knowledge brokerage event on Sustainable Food Consumption

<http://www.scp-responder.eu/pdf/knowledge/papers/RESPONDER%20Food1%20-%20Background%20Paper.pdf>

⁶⁰ Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition (2012) Eating in 2030: trends and perspectives

http://www.barillacfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/alimentazione_2030_eng.pdf

Resulting trends in diets in most European countries has been towards higher consumption of meat, cheese, fruits, vegetables and bottled drinks and a change in consumption patterns towards more ready meals, fast food and out of home consumption. Because most food products are available at affordable prices all year round, food seasonability has lost its meaning. Consumers are increasingly estranged from production of their foodstuffs. Overall increase in food waste, coupled with raising overweight and obesity has also been observed. A decline in nutritional and home economics competencies is also reported despite increasing knowledge on health nutrition.⁶¹ Expectations of a wide choice are a barrier to seasonal eating⁶²

Stakeholder views:

COAG (Spain) noted dietary changes. 'The Spanish are eating Chinese while Germans eat Spanish food. People eating the Mediterranean diet has changed considerably in the last twenty years.'

Spanish Heart Foundation (Spain) noted changes in lifestyles particularly in cities where due to working time there is not much time for cooking and eating at home.

FITAG UGT (Spain) noted changes in traditional diets towards more processed foods as a barrier and the lack of time to follow a healthy diet due to changes in lifestyle.

Federation of Swedish Farmers (Sweden) Unhealthy western diets are easy and convenient. 'We haven't linked food behaviour to health'

Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Sweden) considered stress in society and increased pressures on people to look for quick solutions, though there was some evidence that this was changing with more people cooking. 'It's easy, satisfying and fills you up.'

Access

Access to healthy, sustainable diets does not appear to be as important a factor as those mentioned above. It is mentioned in UK research in relation to sustainable options, though less in the context of not being available, rather the cost of these and not knowing where to find them easily.⁶³

Access to healthy, sustainable choices does not appear to be of great importance where retail settings offer healthy, sustainable choices. Though even where this is the case, the abundant availability of unhealthy, unsustainable products attractively marketed and priced is the more significant barrier.

However in food service sector (restaurants, cafes, canteens, street vendors etc) the availability of healthy, sustainable choices may be a problem.

Stakeholder views:

Swedish Ministry of Rural Affairs (Sweden) Mentioned availability as a barrier.

⁶¹ Videira N et al (2012) Background paper on Sustainable Food Consumption and Growth. 1st Multinational knowledge brokerage event on Sustainable Food Consumption

<http://www.scp-responder.eu/pdf/knowledge/papers/RESPONDER%20Food1%20-%20Background%20Paper.pdf>

⁶² Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, (2011) Attitudes and Behaviours around Sustainable Food Purchasing <http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/files/defra-stats-foodfarm-food-attitudes-report-110406-mainreport.pdf>

⁶³ Stockley, L (2011) Foresight Project on Global Food and Farming Futures WP2: review of levers for changing consumers' food patterns. Government Office for Science, London.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/food-and-farming/additional-reviews/11-598-wp2-review-levers-for-consumers-food-patterns.pdf>

Policy makers: Opportunities

Policy makers have a vital role to play in providing the right enabling framework for people and businesses to act more sustainably.

In recent decades the overriding goal of feeding a hungry world, meant the sustainable diets concept was neglected for many years by policy makers.⁶⁴ Now synergies between improving nutrition through better balanced nutritious diets and reducing the ecological impact of dietary choices is being recognised. A shift to more sustainable diets would trigger upstream effects on food production, the processing chain and food consumption.

Policy wins

For European policy makers addressing sustainable consumption through the encouragement of healthy sustainable diets offers many potential policy wins including addressing obesity and nutritional health, reducing climate change impacts, addressing food security and achieving resource use and environmental goals. Food consumption is one of the areas of consumption that has the largest impact on the environment. Within the EU approximately 1/3rd of households' total environmental impact (including energy use, land use, water, soil pollution and emissions of greenhouse gases) is related to food and drink consumption.⁶⁵

Policy initiatives at international and European level provide opportunities for furthering sustainable diets.

At an international level there is recognition of the importance of sustainable diets to address challenges to global food security and climate change in a world of growing affluence with a predicted population of 9bn people by 2050. For example FAO and Bioversity International⁶⁶ have highlighted the importance of sustainable diets for the consumption of foods with lower water and carbon footprints, as well as promoting the use of food biodiversity through nutritionally rich traditional and local foods. FAO sees an opportunity to develop the concept of sustainable diets for food and nutrition security and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and the post 2015 development agenda⁶⁷

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has sought to define sustainable diets as:
*"Those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources."*⁶⁸

Within the EU a number of policies are relevant that present opportunities for furthering healthy, sustainable diets.

The Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy provide major EU policy frameworks and both are currently being reformed. Other EU policy areas, such as environmental policies and economically-oriented policies, for example on trade regulation and cohesion, also have an important effect on food consumption and production.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ FAO & Bioversity International (2012) Sustainable Diets & Biodiversity: Directions and Solutions for Policy, Research and Action <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i3004e/i3004e.pdf>

⁶⁵ Tukker, A. et al (2009) Environmental Impacts of diet changes in the EU. European Commission, Joint Research Centre.

⁶⁶ FAO & Bioversity International (2012) Sustainable Diets & Biodiversity: Directions and Solutions for Policy, Research and Action <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i3004e/i3004e.pdf>

⁶⁷ ibid

⁶⁸ ibid

⁶⁹ Westhoek, H. et al. (2011), The Protein Puzzle, The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency. www.pbl.nl/en

EU policy towards climate change includes the objective of cutting EU emissions by 80-95% below 1990 levels by 2050. In March 2011 the European Commission set out a pathway to achieving this goal with its *Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050*.⁷⁰

Europe 2020 was launched by the European Commission in 2010 as a successor to the Lisbon Strategy as a ten year strategy aiming to achieve smart, inclusive and sustainable growth. The policy highlights the need to decouple economic growth from the use of natural resources, which is being addressed under the Flagship initiative: Resource Efficient Europe⁷¹ that serves as the umbrella of the European Sustainable Consumption and Production policies. Of relevance to sustainable diets, the Resource-efficiency Roadmap (2011)⁷² states that “by 2020, incentives to healthier and more sustainable food production and consumption will be widespread and will have driven a 20% reduction in the food chain’s resource inputs. Disposal of edible food waste should have been halved in the EU.”

A number of other initiative are in preparation including updating the EU Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan to include introduction of a Product Environmental Footprint Methodology in the EU, and developing a Sustainable Food Communication (2013). Ongoing work to looking at the feasibility of extending the EU Ecolabel to food.

The Commission has also established the European Food Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Round Table with European food supply chain partners. This is discussed further under Opportunities for Business (below).

At a national level a number of European countries and institutions have sought to provide advice on healthy sustainable diets. The Health Council of the Netherlands has produced “Guidelines for a healthy diet: the ecological perspective” in 2011⁷³. Its ‘win-win’ guidelines for a healthy and environmentally friendly diet include a less animal-based/more plant-based diet. France’s Environment and Energy Management Agency⁷⁴ and the German Council for Sustainable Development⁷⁵ also provide advice for healthy, sustainable diets.

Sweden was the first country to produce guidelines for a sustainable diet.⁷⁶ Its proposal to the EU to adopt these guidelines was subsequently withdrawn when the Commission found recommendations to eat more locally produced food contravened free trade rules.⁷⁷

In Italy, the Barilla Centre for Food & Nutrition has created the “Double Pyramid”⁷⁸ illustrating the connections between dietary health and environmental goals. This is based on the Food Pyramid (a balanced healthy diet) together with an inverted Environmental Pyramid. WWF’s ‘Livewell Plate’⁷⁹ researched by the Rowett Research Institute, outlines guidance for a varied and nutritionally balanced diet that would meet UK greenhouse gas emission targets.

⁷⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/roadmap/index_en.htm

⁷¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/resource-efficient-europe/>

⁷² EC. Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe: SEC (2011) 1067 final, SEC (2011) 1068 Final; European Commission: Brussels, 2011, 17–18.

⁷³ Health Council of the Netherlands (2011) Guidelines for a healthy diet: the ecological perspective.

<http://www.gr.nl/sites/default/files/201108E.pdf>

⁷⁴ <http://ecocitoyens.ademe.fr/mes-achats/bien-acheter/alimentation>

⁷⁵ http://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/uploads/media/Brochure_Sustainable_Shopping_Basket_01.pdf

⁷⁶ http://www.slv.se/upload/dokument/miljo/environmentally_effective_food_choices_proposal_eu_2009.pdf

⁷⁷ http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Sweden%20Withdraws%20Proposal%20on%20Climate%20Effective%20Food%20Choices_Sweden_12-1-2010.pdf

⁷⁸ Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition, 2011 Double Pyramid: Healthy food for people, sustainable for the planet

http://www.barillacfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/en_PositionPaper-BarillaCFN_DP.pdf

⁷⁹ WWF (2011) Livewell: A Balance of Healthy and Sustainable Food Choices:

http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/livewell_report_jan11.pdf

Commentators⁸⁰ see opportunities for healthy, sustainable diets through a range of policy measures including eliminating the current system of subsidies for cheap meat products, in favour of major investments in health diets, green public procurement, and taxation of unhealthy foods. The Barilla Institute⁸¹ identifies a role for policymakers to enable consumers by providing clarity of messages to inform and educate. In addition it sees opportunities in other policy initiatives including using price leverage to encourage healthier choices, alongside interventions that encourage the consumption of healthier alternatives and make them accessible.

Public procurement has been identified as providing opportunities for supporting healthy, sustainable food.⁸²

Stakeholder views

Stakeholders at LiveWell workshop (Sept 2012) identified institutional procurement as an opportunity, specifically healthy, sustainable school meals.

CECU (Spain) supported the use of public catering, eg schools and hospitals to promote messages.

MAGRAMA (Spain) regulation to reduce calories in public canteens and schools (check).

ICA retailer (Sweden) saw an opportunity to reform agricultural policies and for policy makers to take into account the bigger picture and environmental issues and look ahead to 2050, rather than focus on special interests. We have to be aware of the problems ahead and why we have to adjust to more sustainable diets. It's not going to happen that quickly and needs a lot of communication and education of the public and politicians. This has to be driven by the EU rather than nationally. Legislation is part of the solution to move forward.

Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Sweden) saw opportunities for green procurement, for education, economic incentives eg taxing meat, though noted this needs more research.

Policy makers: Barriers

Focus on food production not consumption

Policies to address issues of food security and sustainability largely focus on agricultural production, and technological, efficiency measures, with a reluctance to recognise the importance food consumption. The expert EU Standing Committee on Agriculture Research (SCAR) report⁸³ concludes that the focus of research and policy has been on the supply-side by providing technological innovations, however social innovations in the domain of production are as important as technological ones. For instance changing the supply chains (e.g. more local purchasing) may have huge impacts on costs and also on creating closer links and confidence between producers and consumers. The report underlines the fact that it is equally important to address demand-side issues, and to reduce the present unsustainable levels of consumption. Therefore, research on behavioral or structural changes in food systems and supply chains should be given a higher priority.

Technical solutions are unlikely to solve the sustainability challenge and behavioural change and altered lifestyles will have to play major roles.⁸⁴ The current policy focus on 'efficiency' mainly drives farmers

⁸⁰ <http://www.scp-responder.eu/pdf/knowledge/papers/RESPONDER%20Food1%20-%20Background%20Paper.pdf>

⁸¹ Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition (2012) Eating in 2030: trends and perspectives http://www.barillacfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/alimentazione_2030_eng.pdf

⁸² European Commission (2012) Feeding the planet sustainably: from foresight to better integrated policies http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/events/sustainable-food_en.htm

⁸³ Freibauer A et al (2011) Sustainable Food consumption and production in a resource-constrained world. Report European Commission – Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Brussels, European Commission DG Research and Innovation <http://ec.europa.eu/research/agriculture/conference/pdf/feg3-report-web-version.pdf>

⁸⁴ Videira N et al (2012) Background paper on Sustainable Food Consumption and Growth. 1st Multinational knowledge brokerage event on Sustainable Food Consumption

and others actors in the food chain in the direction of cost price reduction. Policies aimed at reducing consumption, hardly exist and policies regarding producing with fewer local impacts are usually secondary to economic and trade policies.⁸⁵

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) highlights the need for policies that address consumption as well as production.

'What I am trying to say is that we need to look not only at the production side, but also at consumption. It's especially important when we consider the environmental implications of increasing food production. To answer the 9 billion people question, we can't look only at the production side, we also need to look at consumption. That ranges from access at one end to reducing waste at the other.' Jose Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)⁸⁶

Stakeholder views

The Federation of Swedish Farmers (Sweden) noted that the EU creates the framework for all member states though its focus is largely on resource efficiency.

Swedish Ministry of Rural Affairs (Sweden). EU needs to focus on consumption as well a production.

Economic climate

The current economic climate has placed a greater political emphasis on boosting growth, jobs and the economy and ensuring 'cheap' food for consumers. Sustainability and environmental goals are seen as less of a priority by many politicians at this time, indicative of the conflict between short term political priorities and longer term goals. Researchers identify the need for policy makers to take planetary boundaries more seriously and to receive more attention in public research funding⁸⁷.

The agriculture, food and drink manufacturing industries and food retailers are also very powerful lobby groups and often more influential with policy makers than consumer, health and environmental interests. The result can be voluntary initiatives rather than governments using the full range of policy levers at their disposal. The Danish Environmental Protection Agency has compiled guidance for policy makers aiming to promote Sustainable Consumption and Production in the food retailing sector. This states that "Government has an important enabling role to play in using policy levers to support the development of a business case for manufacturers and retailers to produce and deliver more sustainable products."⁸⁸ It calls for a more integrated and coherent policy framework, and recommends the development of eco-tax reforms, shifting tax from labour to material consumption.

Stakeholder views:

FITAG UG (Spanish Agricultural Labour Union) thought governments would support sustainable diets if this doesn't mean increased use of public funds.

Spanish Heart Foundation (Spain) There is a lack of financial support in school canteens due to the economic crisis.

ICA retailer (Sweden) thought that environmental issues were not high on the current political agenda and thought that people weren't interested anymore.

<http://www.scp-responder.eu/pdf/knowledge/papers/RESPONDER%20Food1%20-%20Background%20Paper.pdf>

⁸⁵ Westhoek, H. et al. (2011), The Protein Puzzle, The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency. www.pbl.nl/en

⁸⁶ Keynote Address by José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to Feeding the World in 2050 Conference Geneva, Switzerland, 8 February 2012

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/FAODG/docs/2012-02-08-DG_Economist_Conference-FINAL.pdf

⁸⁷ Freibauer A et al (2011) Sustainable Food consumption and production in a resource-constrained world. Report European Commission – Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Brussels, European Commission DG Research and Innovation.

<http://ec.europa.eu/rese/arch/agriculture/conference/pdf/feg3-report-web-version.pdf>

⁸⁸ http://www.mst.dk/English/Sustainability/scp/green_nordic_retail/WhatCanPolicymakersDo/what_can_policymakers_do.htm#Overview_of_SCP_Policy_Instruments%20%20

CECU (Spain) The industry lobby is too strong eg beverage companies arguing against recycling of bottles and the power of advertising and the agro-industry. 'It is unclear where Government is going – it is behaving like a four year old'

Institutional barriers

The complexity of decision-making bodies at international, EU, national, regional, local levels creates barriers. Policies to support healthy, sustainable diets also require the integration of a diversity of policies including health, environment, agriculture, climate change and social justice. This can pose challenges to governance structures and institutions to work in a joined-up manner. Sharon Friel and co-authors in the *Lancet* writes: 'Coordinated intersectoral action is needed across agricultural, nutritional, public health, and climate change communities worldwide to provide affordable, healthy, low-emission diets for all societies'.⁸⁹

Cross sectoral co-ordination can be aided by overarching 'food' strategies and policies. At a European level there are many relevant policies and strategies is no overarching EU sustainable food strategy. THE UK's overarching strategy, Food 2030, is a rare example that recognizes the need for cross sector engagement at a policy level.⁹⁰

Stakeholder views:

La Paz Hospital (Spain) noted that there might be challenges in adopting sustainability messages into the 'dietary bible' for health.

The Federation of Swedish Farmers (Sweden) thought it was important for government to have a vision and a plan with policies to make it possible that takes a longer term perspective otherwise investment will not be made.

FITAG UGT (Spain) saw the lack of a level playing field outside the EU as a barrier which meant European production couldn't compete in a global market 'because we are not using the same rules on environmental and social aspects.'

ICA retailer (Sweden) raised the challenge that the Swedish Food Authority had developed advice on environmentally friendly diet but the European Commission had rejected it.

Reluctance to engage in behaviour change policies

A strong barrier at the political level is reluctance to 'interfere with personal choice' and fear of backlash from producers (at a time of austerity) and public (particularly re meat consumption).⁹¹ Behaviour change policies can be deemed to difficult and/or too unpredictable. As with the public the concept and benefits of healthy, sustainable diets can be poorly understood by policy makers.

As EU experts⁹² point out, there are real challenges here for policy makers to determine appropriate roles for governments. How far can governments go? How far can they act themselves via campaigns, standards, regulations, payments? How far can government empower civil society actors such as NGOs or market actors such as health insurance companies? The authors believe solutions lie in empowering consumers instead of telling them what to or not to eat. However they recognise that 'our understanding of consumers' attitudes is far from complete'.

⁸⁹ Friel et al (2009) Public health benefits of strategies to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions: food and agriculture. *Lancet* 374, 2016-25.

⁹⁰ HM Government, (2010) Food 2030. <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/food/pdf/food2030strategy.pdf>

⁹¹ UK Sustainable Development Commission (2011) Making Sustainable Lives Easier: A Priority for Governments, Business and Society <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/MakingSustainableLivesEasier.pdf>

⁹² Freibauer A et al (2011) Sustainable Food consumption and production in a resource-constrained world. Report European Commission – Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Brussels, European Commission DG Research and Innovation (pVIII) <http://ec.europa.eu/research/arch/agriculture/conference/pdf/feg3-report-web-version.pdf>

These questions are particularly pertinent at the current time when short term political goals focus on promoting food production and exports, including that of agriculture. At a time when consumers are already cutting back on their food expenditure due to rising food prices and the economic downturn, there is little political appetite for policies that seek to reduce consumption further.

There are uncertainties about how a new change in consumer diets – that is a shift to a more healthy, values-based consumption (high quality, organic, fair trade, local, regional, environmentally friendly, seasonal) will evolve. As experts note, such a shift seems to be slow and very volatile and sensitive to the economic situation.⁹³

What appears to be needed from policy makers is clear and consistent political leadership, which models the behaviour and the development of policies and environments which do not inhibit but actively support change.⁹⁴ This notes that in a European survey there was strong support for a taxation system to promote eco-friendly products.

WWF-UK have put forward policy recommendations for government⁹⁵ to:

- Lead the development of a clear definition of a sustainable diet as a priority, in conjunction with other stakeholders, and convert this definition into specific dietary guidance.
- Evaluate the full suite of policy tools available to facilitate changes in consumption patterns and use this insight to outline specific policy objectives that implicate the business sector (including retail and food service).
- Identify policy measures to buffer negative industry impacts that might arise from wholesale changes in diets as a result of action by retailers and food service businesses.

Stakeholder views

COAG (Spain) saw providing harmonized, easy to understand messages as a Government task. Eg launching 3-4 key messages in ways that are easy for consumers to understand.

MAGRAMA (Spain) noted that the agroindustry is the main industrial sector in Spain so any call for a decrease in processed foods would be against the objectives of the Agricultural Ministry.

ICA retailer (Sweden) said there was a lack of advice and it was the role of Food Authorities to develop messages and make it easier for the consumer. Government and food authorities had not communicated to help consumers understand. There was also a need for more effectively labeling. Also concerned there is too much advertising of junk food particularly to children. Thought government wanted to rely on businesses to communicate for them.

Swedish Food Protection Agency (Sweden) Increasing the public's awareness will make it easier for politicians to take action.

Spanish Heart Foundation (Spain) noted that marketing is mainly self-regulated by the private sector and the Health Ministry does not take an active role in promoting healthy diet. Saw the need for school lunches to be a 'public good' and policy change to declare calories on menus and the promotion of exercise.

La Paz Hospital (Spain) saw marketing and advertising as a problem. 'When it comes to food now, people follow advertising more than they decide.'

⁹³ Freibauer A et al (2011) Sustainable Food consumption and production in a resource-constrained world. Report European Commission – Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Brussels, European Commission DG Research and Innovation

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/agriculture/conference/pdf/feg3-report-web-version.pdf>

⁹⁴ Stockley, L (2011) Foresight Project on Global Food and Farming Futures WP2: review of levers for changing consumers' food patterns. Government Office for Science, London.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/food-and-farming/additional-reviews/11-598-wp2-review-levers-for-consumers-food-patterns.pdf>

⁹⁵ WWF-UK (2012) *Selling Sustainability: In search of the retail business case for sustainable diets.* http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/selling_sustainability_full.pdf

FITAG UGT (Spain) saw the importance of involving society and governments (laws as well as awareness raising campaigns) to promote sustainable diets. Also noted that changing diet is a long term challenge while politics has short term goals.

Swedish Ministry of Rural Affairs (Sweden) 'Sustainability is seen as a matter of personal choice. It is difficult to discuss at a political level. There is a political reluctance.'

Food chain: Opportunities

Businesses in the food chain, including farmers, food manufacturers, retailers and the food service sector, have a crucial role to play in enabling changes in consumption as well as production patterns. The expert European Commission Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) report highlights the crucial role for food companies to address sustainable food consumption and production issues. It urges companies to take their responsibilities seriously and to develop looking for business models for sustainable food production, processing and retail activities that are sensitive to consumer concerns.⁹⁶

Meeting society's expectations

There is increasing societal awareness of the opportunities to improve the quality of life through healthy eating and of the contribution that sustainable production can make to improvement of the overall environment.⁹⁷ The preferences of consumers for quality, convenience, diversity and health and their expectations of safety, ethics and sustainable food production highlight the opportunities for business innovation.

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) points out that consumers are increasingly aware of environmental and social challenges, and are looking to companies for solutions. They will reward brands for addressing their aspirations, including the need to 'tread lightly' and will increasingly avoid brands that feel unsustainable or irresponsible.⁹⁸ WBCSD draws attentions to the benefits for businesses:

*'It is in its own interest to find new solutions for more sustainable consumption patterns. Otherwise business will face significant consequences including rising costs, uncertainty, increased regulation and friction: the debate over sustainable consumption could become polarized and deadlocked. Innovation, productivity, brand value and sales would all suffer from the tensions between corporate objectives, consumer behaviour and sustainability.'*⁹⁹

European policy

European policy activity presents opportunities for businesses engagement. The European Food Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Round Table¹⁰⁰ is an initiative that is co-chaired by the European Commission and food supply chain partners, established in 2009. There are 24 member organisations representing the European food supply chain.

The aim of the European Food SCP Round Table is to establish the food chain as a major contributor towards sustainable consumption and production in Europe to strengthen competitiveness and support EU policy objectives. Its primary focus is the communication of environmental performance to the

⁹⁶ Freibauer A et al (2011) Sustainable Food consumption and production in a resource-constrained world. Report European Commission – Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Brussels, European Commission DG Research and Innovation

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/agriculture/conference/pdf/feg3-report-web-version.pdf>

⁹⁷ Rossi D, Sustainability and Diversity Along the Food Chain in Sustainable Diets and Biodiversity, Directions and Solutions for Policy, Research and Action, FAO/Bioversity International, FAO 2012

http://www.bioversityinternational.org/fileadmin/bioversity/publications/pdfs/1539_Sustainable_diets_and_biodiversity_Final_13July2012.pdf?cache=1342541455

⁹⁸ WBCSD (2011) *A vision for sustainable consumption: Innovation, collaboration and the management of choice*,

<http://www.wbcd.org/Pages/EDocument/EDocumentDetails.aspx?ID=13718&NoSearchContextKey=true>

⁹⁹ WBCSD (2011) *A vision for sustainable consumption: Innovation, collaboration and the management of choice*.

<http://www.wbcd.org/Pages/EDocument/EDocumentDetails.aspx?ID=13718&NoSearchContextKey=true>

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.food-scp.eu>

consumer to support 'informed choice'. It intends to adopt the final methodology and recommendations on how to voluntarily communicate environmental information by the end of 2013.

Business opportunities to shape consumer choices

Businesses within the food chain are crucial to mainstreaming sustainable behaviours among consumers. To help with this, companies need to develop offerings that are attractive, accessible and affordable.¹⁰¹ There are opportunities for business to 'choice edit' for example by setting minimum sustainability standards and avoiding the production and consumption of unsustainable products and developing more closed loop models of consumption, taking full account of the resource lifecycle.

Retailers in particular have been identified as playing a crucial role given the trend towards globalization and the ongoing concentration of players in the food chain, particularly in the retail sector.¹⁰² WWF-UK research into the retail business case for sustainable diets¹⁰³ concluded that retailers are in a unique position to shape the consumer experience, to control what is and what is not made available, to sell not just products but lifestyles. Upon them rests a very considerable responsibility. Individual consumers may 'want' an environmentally friendly option; governments and NGOs may hope for the same; but it is, in the end, retailers who are at the heart of the food system. It notes that there may not yet be a business case for sustainable diets that meets retailer requirements; but unless and until retailers make it straightforward for consumers to buy a sustainable diet, the prospects for radical change are limited. It notes that retailer activities to promote sustainable diets are piecemeal at present – occurring only in the presence of strong evidence of a commercial imperative to act.

Retailers also have a key role in influencing supply chains and can enter into agreements with farmers and other food suppliers, for example to improve production techniques.¹⁰⁴

UK-based retailer, Marks & Spencer is one retailer that has developed an ambitious sustainability strategy, Plan A.¹⁰⁵ This includes commitments on climate change, waste, sustainable sourcing, ethical trading and helping customers and employees to live healthier lifestyles. The company aspires to become the world's most sustainable major retailer by 2015.

At the producer level, there are opportunities for farmers and primary producers to produce higher value products to higher standards, eg environmental and animal welfare. Current policy and institutional setting mainly drive farmers and other actors in the direction of cost price reductions, and thus primarily support the 'efficiency' strategy. Seasonal foods cultivated and processed at local/regional scale may also offer opportunities, though this is generally at odds with productivity driven narratives.¹⁰⁶

For manufacturers cost savings and resource efficiency are a priority. Leading European manufacturers are also engaged with supporting sustainable consumption. In 2012 FoodDrink Europe, the body that represents European food manufacturing sector, launched its environmental sustainability vision for

¹⁰¹ WBCSD (2011) *A vision for sustainable consumption: Innovation, collaboration and the management of choice*.

<http://www.wbcsd.org/Pages/EDocument/EDocumentDetails.aspx?ID=13718&NoSearchContextKey=true>

¹⁰² Westhoek, H. et al. (2011) *The Protein Puzzle*, The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency. www.pbl.nl/en

¹⁰³ WWF-UK (2012) *Selling Sustainability: In search of the retail business case for sustainable diets*

http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/selling_sustainability_full.pdf

¹⁰⁴ Westhoek, H. et al. (2011), *The Protein Puzzle*, The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency. www.pbl.nl/en

¹⁰⁵ <http://plana.marksandspencer.com/>

¹⁰⁶ Videira N et al (2012) Background paper on Sustainable Food Consumption and Growth. 1st Multinational knowledge brokerage event on Sustainable Food Consumption <http://www.scp-responder.eu/pdf/knowledge/papers/RESPONDER%20Food1%20-%20Background%20Paper.pdf>

2030.¹⁰⁷ This states that the industry will engage with retailers and other stakeholders: to inform consumers about the impact of their diet on sustainability and how it relates to their lifestyles and look beyond consumer information to facilitate increased awareness and public debate on sustainable consumption.

Unilever is one company seeking to show leadership and demonstrate responsible business practices in respect of sustainable consumption. Its Sustainable Living Plan¹⁰⁸ includes global commitments to source 100% of agricultural raw materials sustainably and increase the nutritional profile of products by 2020. In the UK Unilever has launched a campaign to address the challenge that sustainable lifestyles are more expensive. The Sustain Ability Challenge aims to help UK families cut food waste and reduce household bills. Unilever is providing tools, advice and inspiration to help families reduce their monthly food bills by 15% and their household rubbish by 25%.¹⁰⁹

There are also opportunities for the food service sector, particularly public procurement. 40% of calories are consumed out of home. Within food service, public food service represents in Europe 21 billion of meals served every year for an annual turnover of 77 billion euro. Therefore the economic leverage of public procurement can give a strong signal of change and innovation by promoting more sustainable food production and consumption patterns.¹¹⁰

Stakeholder views:

A number of stakeholders saw opportunities in green public procurement discussed under Government Opportunities: Policy wins above.

Food chain: Barriers

Influencing consumers

The role of food businesses, particularly retailers, influencing consumers is challenging.¹¹¹ According to research for WWF-UK, in broad policy terms, consumer sovereignty remains paramount – at national and international level. Retailers are acutely conscious of the fact that, unless they keep their customers 'happy', then market share, profits and reputation can all suffer. Hence incremental change is, from such a perspective, the best that can be hoped for.

A major challenge is taking sustainability beyond a niche market. As WBCSD points out, for a variety of reasons, including price, performance and false perceptions, more sustainable products and services have tended to appeal only to niche markets, with limited impacts.¹¹² WWF-UK also notes the absence of market opportunities for developing more sustainable product lines because of limited consumer demand for such products.¹¹³

Stakeholder views:

Coop Agro (Spain) considered that consumer behaviour change needs to be supported most of all by business action.

ICA retailer (Sweden) said it was important to engage all actors in the supply chain and engage the

¹⁰⁷ FoodDrinkEurope (2012): Environmental Sustainability Vision Towards 2030.

http://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu/uploads/publications_documents/temp_file_FDE_RAcondense06FINAL1.pdf

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.unilever.com/sustainable-living/uslp/>

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.2degreesnetwork.com/register/b8e064a8-3967-455b-9418-e81e98ad291d/>

¹¹⁰ The potential of food services to deliver sustainable food, workshop report from Feeding the Planet Sustainably: from foresight to better integrated policies, Brussels November 2012)

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/events/2012/food-sustainability/report-group-2_en.pdf

¹¹¹ WWF-UK (2012) *Selling Sustainability: In search of the retail business case for sustainable diets*

http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/selling_sustainability_full.pdf

¹¹² WBCSD (2011) *A vision for sustainable consumption: Innovation, collaboration and the management of choice*,

<http://www.wbcsd.org/Pages/EDocument/EDocumentDetails.aspx?ID=13718&NoSearchContextKey=true>

¹¹³ WWF-UK (2012) *Selling Sustainability: In search of the retail business case for sustainable diets*

http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/selling_sustainability_full.pdf

whole of society. In Sweden it was not taken up jointly.

Supply-side challenges

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development¹¹⁴ highlights supply-side challenges for sustainability. Most businesses, it explains, have spent years refining their processes and business models, and are operating efficiently and profitably, according to the signals they get from the marketplace. While production efficiencies have helped to drive down the cost of some products and services, some more sustainable offerings can often be more expensive than their traditional versions. A switch to more sustainable product portfolios and business models can require additional investment, changes in corporate culture and practices, different skill sets, and better integration throughout the value chain. For these reasons, new, more sustainable products, processes and services can struggle to get to scale, and to compete with established offerings.

The need to understand, manage and report impacts throughout the value chain also poses a new challenge, since supply chains can be opaque and highly complex. Their increasing complexity makes it difficult and expensive to assess and manage the impacts of a specific product, process or service. Changing these supply chains can be time consuming, and require new types and levels of collaboration. Existing regulatory frameworks – for example, with relation to anti-competitive behavior – can interfere with this process.

Stakeholder views:

Stakeholders in the LiveWell workshop (2012) raised the challenge of global supply chains where food producers are dependent on non-EU producers for example cheap Asian commodities.

MAGRAMA (Spain) was concerned about the proliferation of restaurants offering ‘easy foods’ with lack of variety in menus.

FITAT-UGT (Spain) saw a problem with an imbalance in the food chain which saw unfair prices for farmers and consumers while providing higher benefits for the distribution sectors.

Federation of Swedish Farmers Many farmers are going out of business. There is a need for agricultural policies to ensure farmers are more secure in developing their businesses.

Policy framework challenge

Without clear political and policy signals and incentives, many businesses feel limited in the progress towards sustainability they can make. For example, WWF-UK’s Selling Sustainability report highlights the commercial disbenefits for retailers of shifting consumption patterns against the grain of consumer demand in the absence of policy requirements to act. Even when regulations and fiscal incentives exist, according to WBCSD they are inconsistent from one country to another, and there is a lack of a globally binding agreement on climate change.¹¹⁵ The inconsistencies in national frameworks can provoke capital flight from tightly regulated countries to countries with more laissez-faire regimes, often with no net financial, environmental or social benefit. Furthermore, the lack of an effective international framework allows importer countries to avoid responsibility for the impacts of production abroad.

While laws, regulations and incentives are sometimes inconsistent in these respects, WBCSC points out they are often consistent in another way: in giving existing business models competitive advantage over more sustainable ones. More sustainable businesses often face higher costs, even if they stand to gain more in the long run; they have to invest more, earlier, and with longer pay-off periods.

¹¹⁴ WBCSD (2011) *A vision for sustainable consumption: Innovation, collaboration and the management of choice*, <http://www.wbcsd.org/Pages/EDocument/EDocumentDetails.aspx?ID=13718&NoSearchContextKey=true>

¹¹⁵ WBCSD (2011) *A vision for sustainable consumption: Innovation, collaboration and the management of choice*, <http://www.wbcsd.org/Pages/EDocument/EDocumentDetails.aspx?ID=13718&NoSearchContextKey=true>

Lack of authoritative definition of sustainable diets

For the industry, a lack of an authoritative definition of ‘sustainable diets’ is a barrier. As WWF-UK report, *Selling Sustainability* (2012)¹¹⁶ examining the retail business case for sustainable diets in the UK points out: Retailers are concerned about reputational risks associated with providing consumers with advice and information about sustainable diets in the absence of a universally agreed definition among stakeholders. Retailers say there is a risk of confusing or alienating consumers by engaging with them on the issue of sustainable diets too soon, in case there’s a need to reframe the issue at a later date in the face of emerging scientific evidence or political position on the issue. As a result, retailer activities to promote sustainable diets are piecemeal at present. The report concludes that there is an urgent need for all stakeholders involved to work quickly to establish a consensus-based definition of a sustainable diet.

Stakeholder views:

The Federation of Swedish Farmers (Sweden) noted that Sweden had been engaged with defining sustainable diets for a number of years. It was also recognized that further research is required.

ICA retailer (Sweden) saw the lack of common understanding of what a healthy sustainable diet as a barrier to working together.

Conclusion

The research for this report has identified twenty-two socio-economic opportunities and barriers for sustainable diets in Europe. It draws on a literature review and interviews with stakeholders in Spain and Sweden – two of the project’s pilot countries.

This report has distinguished opportunities and barriers as they relate to three key interest groups: people, policy makers and business.

Further work is planned to include feedback from stakeholders in France into the analysis and to analyse the opportunities and barriers that have been identified in order to develop criteria to support the identification of the top 10 socio-economic barriers and opportunities.

¹¹⁶ *Selling Sustainability: In search of the retail business case for sustainable diets* (WWF, 2012)
http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/selling_sustainability_full.pdf