

SIX STEPS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS



*There is growing evidence that consumers' food choices are shaped by the 'food environments' they navigate in. **Most individuals, however, do not realise the extent to which their eating habits are steered by a multiplicity of factors**, from the ads they see on billboards and the range of food products that are available at the supermarket, through to the promotional offers and discounts offered by their local retailers.*

*Today's food environments largely push consumers towards diets which are not in line with healthy eating recommendations. Yet **shifting to healthy, more plant-based diets with 'less and better' animal source foods (ASF) can benefit people's health** while bringing a series of co-benefits for the climate and environment, as well as farm animal welfare and food security.*

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'Food environment' refers to the physical, economic, political and socio-cultural context in which consumers engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food.

United Nations HLPE, 2017.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

The European Commission has announced a proposal for a legislative Framework for Sustainable Food Systems. This landmark law must **pave the ground for a transformation of food environments** through subsequent policy measures and interventions, both at EU and national level, to address the **availability, affordability, and desirability of healthy and sustainable food**. Specifically:

1

HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD CHOICES MUST BE THE MOST AFFORDABLE

Food prices need to send the right signal to consumers, and support the shift to diets richer in fruit, vegetables, and pulses and with 'less and better' ASF. Retailers should be required, through their price and promotion strategies, to increase the affordability of healthy and sustainable food. Governments should also act (via fiscal measures and subsidies) to make healthy and sustainable food more affordable.



2

HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD CHOICES MUST BE MADE WIDELY AVAILABLE AND ATTRACTIVE

Retailers should improve the availability and appeal of healthy and sustainable food, while restrictions should apply to the location promotion of unhealthy products. Governments should set targets for increasing the proportion of supermarket sales from healthy and sustainable food at national level.



3



HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD CHOICES MUST BE THE MOST MARKETED

The EU should regulate (ban) the marketing of unhealthy food to children under 18. As for its own promotion policy for agricultural products, the EU should ensure it is aligned with healthy eating guidelines and only includes products Europeans should consume more of.

4



HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD CHOICES MUST BE EASY WHEN EATING OUT

Food and beverage service chains and meal delivery platforms should be required to provide calorie information on menus and adapt their offer in line with healthy and sustainable eating recommendations.

5



THE HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD CHOICE MUST BE THE DEFAULT CHOICE FOR PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Mandatory requirements should be introduced for sustainable public food procurement, covering the environmental, social-health (including animal welfare) and economic dimensions. Member States should be required to update their food-based dietary guidelines with a view to integrate sustainability measures, so that these can serve as a reference for procuring sustainable and healthy meals in public settings.

6



FOOD MUST BECOME HEALTHIER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE BY DESIGN

As announced in the Farm to Fork Strategy, the EU should stimulate the reformulation of processed food, including via setting maximum levels for certain nutrients (saturated fat, added sugars and salt). To increase the availability of 'better' ASF, EU farm animal welfare standards should be strengthened and should apply equally to imported products.



Eurogroup for Animals, the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) have joined forces for a project called 'Put Change on the Menu' to move the debate around food environments to the forefront and campaign for food environments that promote healthy, sustainable diets that feature 'less and better' animal products. The coalition collected evidence and examples of food environments and published a report in June 2023 illustrating the many factors that influence consumers' food choices.

View the full report [here](#).

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