

Sustainability & healthy eating strategies for public food: can we make a difference?

Tim Lang

Centre for Food Policy, City University London

t.lang@city.ac.uk

Paper to ‘Novel strategies for Climate mitigation, Sustainability and Healthy eating in Public Foodscapes’, Copenhagen, November 25, 2009

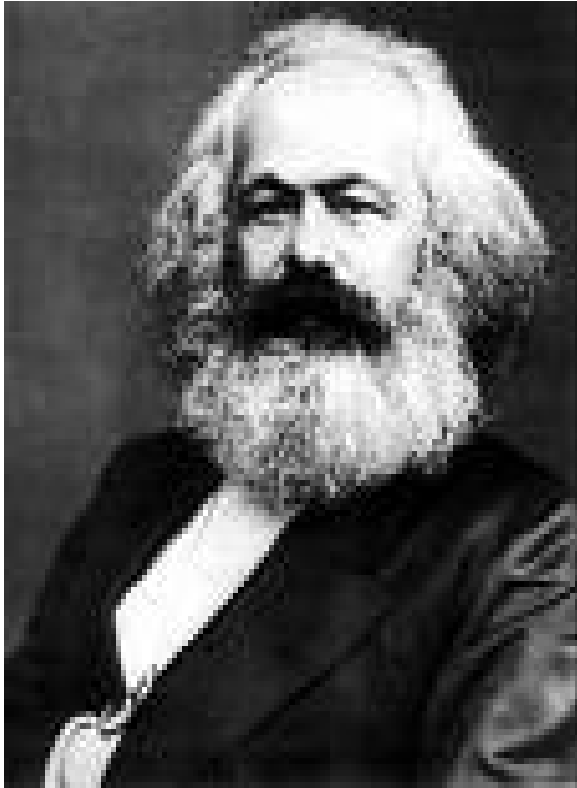
[pre-climate summit event (COP15)]

Summary

- We meet when world attention is on COP-15
- Food is more than carbon / climate change
- There are broad public health and environmental critiques of food systems
- These need to reshape future food policy
- A new food culture needs to be built on health, environment and social needs
- COP-15 is only part of the future for food policy

1. What's the problem?

An old debate: the 3 M's



Dr Karl Marx
1818-1883



Rev. Thomas Malthus
(1766-1834)

*An Essay on the Principle of
Population (1798)*

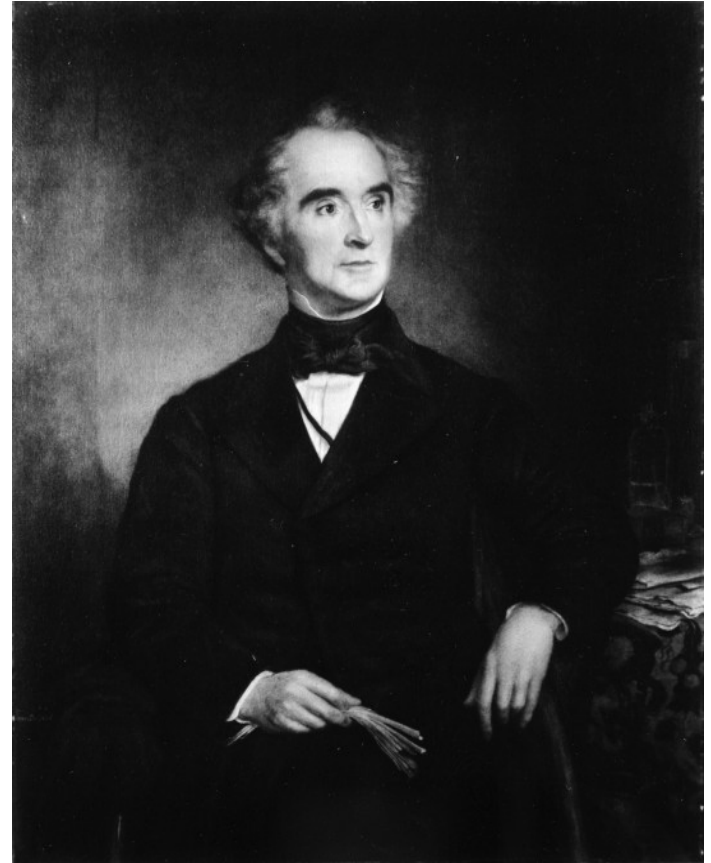


Fr Gregor Mendel
monk & geneticist
(1822-1884)

C19th Agricultural progressives



Sir John Bennet Lawes
agricultural research
(1803-1873)



Justus von Liebig
chemist (1803-1873)



Linking food, health, income & justice



John Boyd Orr
(1880-1971)

public health / 1st D-G of FAO



Sicco Mansholt (1908-1995)

1st European Agriculture
Commissioner for 1958-1972



Their policy formula **(the Productionist Paradigm)**

Science + capital + distribution
→ output → cheaper food
→ health = progress

The model worked but faced challenges in the mid C20th

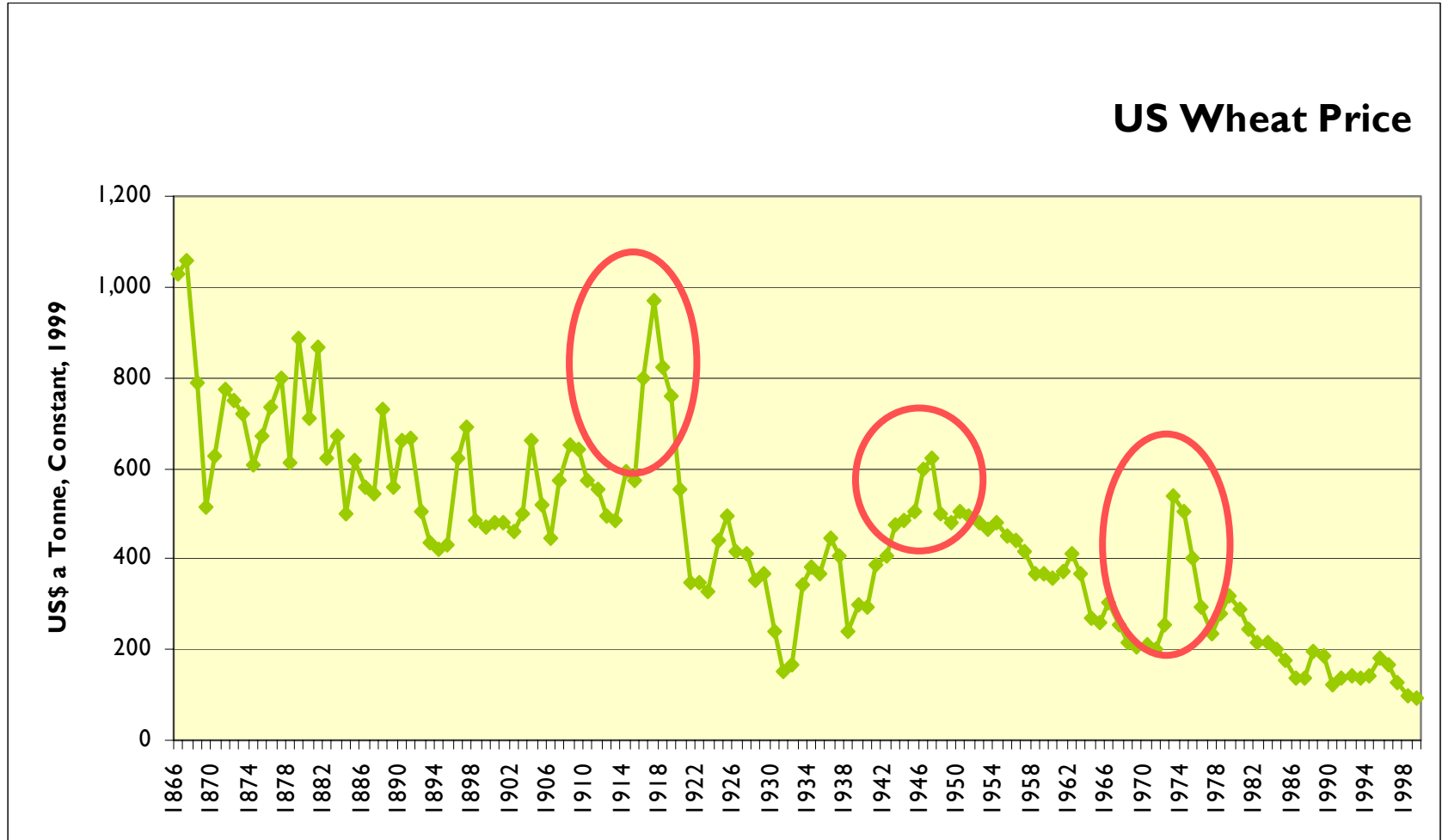
- 1970s crisis exposed oil reliance:
 - Saved by Green Revolution – plants + fertilisers
 - Reshaped by 1970s neo-liberalism
- 2000s crisis raises other limits:
 - Environment: ‘mining’ of water, eco-systems, land, fertilisers (Atlas Mountains)
 - Economic: capital given to bankers not green vision?
 - Society: consumers locked into consumerism?
- Solutions still the 3 M’s (updated)

Modern food culture: celebrities, burgerisation, supermarketisation



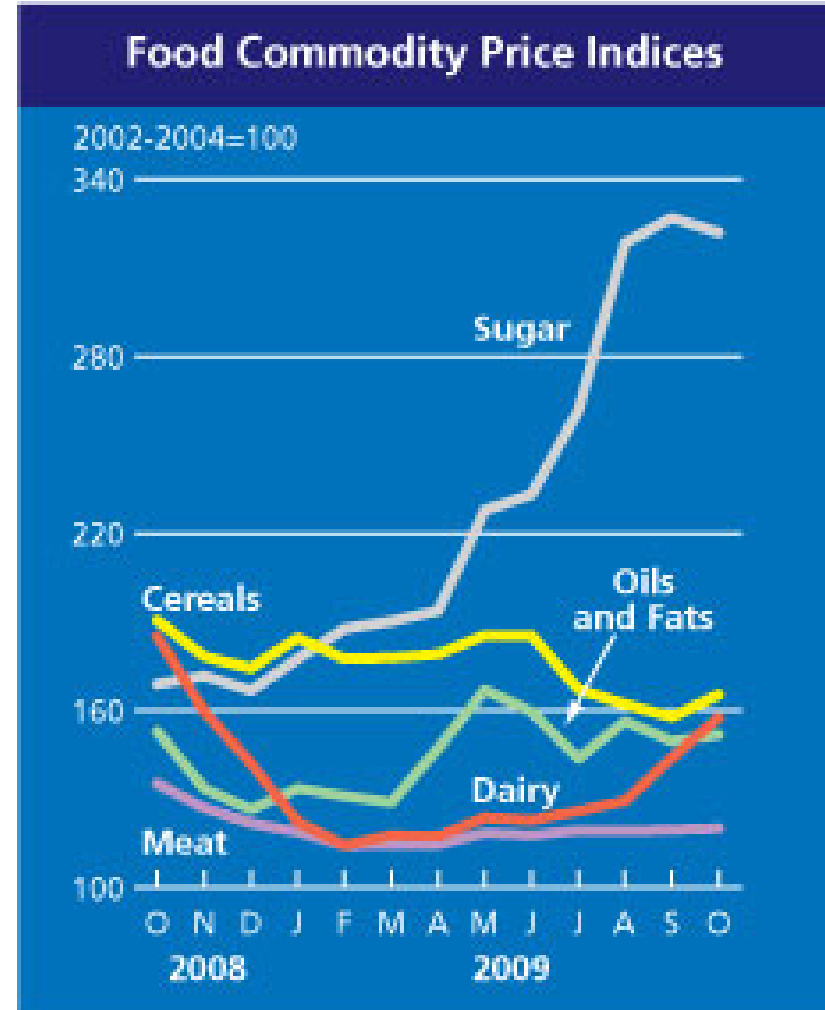
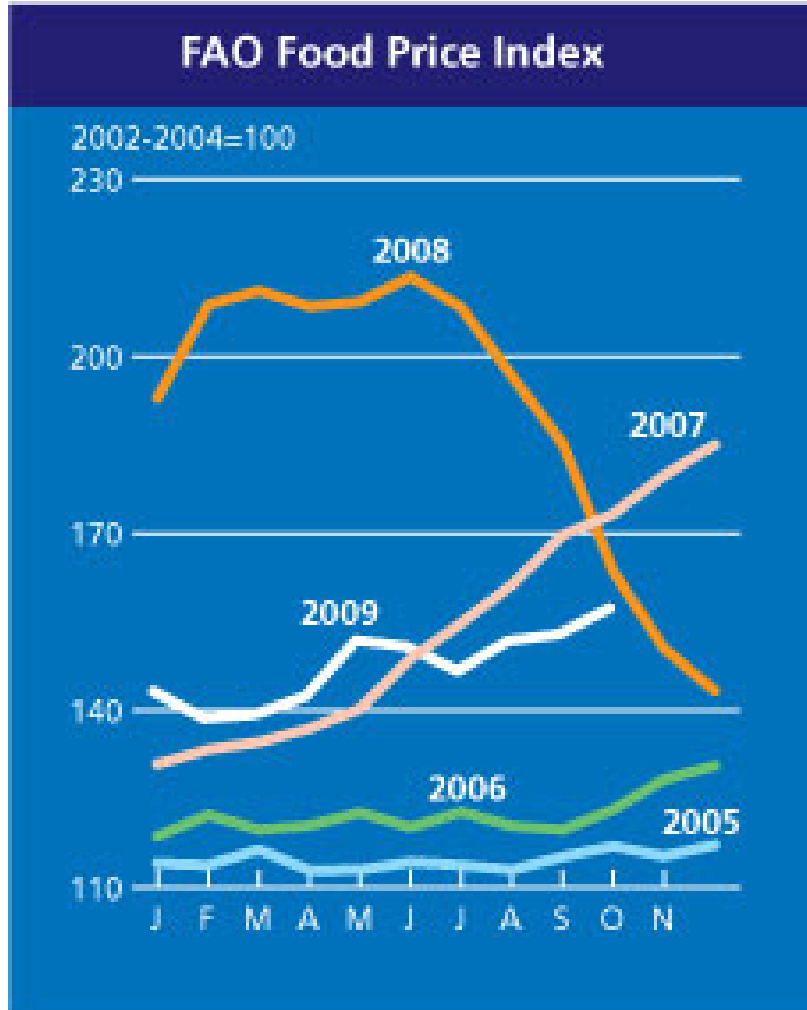
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The optimistic view: prices fall



Source: USDA

But... 2005-09 prices go up, down & up?



source: <http://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/en/>
[accessed November 20 2009]

**2. The C21st challenge is to deliver
a sustainable food system and
sustainable diets**



Policies will be based on New (& Old) Fundamentals

- Climate change
- Fuel / oil / energy
- Water
- Biodiversity
- Soil
- Land use
- Labour
- Population (9bn 2050)
- Urbanisation
- Affluence (BRICs +)
- Nutrition transition
- Inequality
- Healthcare costs

In practice this means: how can we inject Omni-Standards into business and supply chains?

Environmental:

- Climate change
- Water
- Land use
- Biodiversity

Health:

- Safety
- Nutrition
- Access / affordability

Quality:

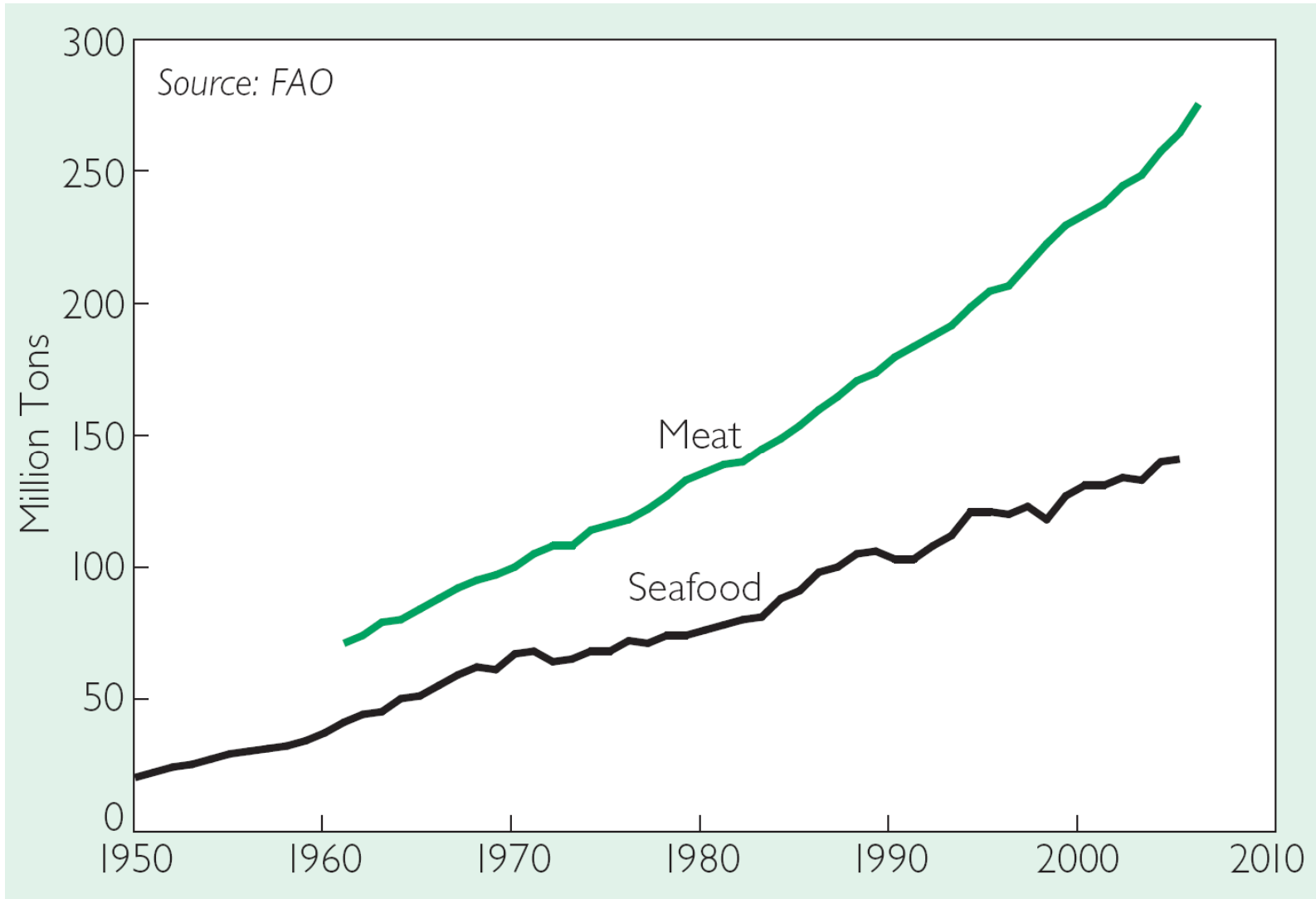
- Pleasure
- Fresh (?)
- Local identity
- Seasonality

• Social values:

- Animal welfare
- Working conditions
- Equality
- Cost internalisation



Meat & fish: how much more?



**3. Responses are emerging
(but are they fast enough?)**



Sweden gives EU lead

- May 2009
- Offers evidence-based eco-nutrition guidelines
- Now submitted to the European Commission
- Joint work by National Food Administration & Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
- Other input (e.g. Swedish Board of Fisheries)
- Framed around eco-conscious consumers, rather than population
- Focus on key food groups



Environmentally effective food choices
Proposal notified to the EU¹ 15.05.09

1. -----IND- 2009 0292 S-- EN- ----- 20090608 --- --- PROJET

LIVSMEDELS
VERKET
NATIONAL FOOD ADMINISTRATION

The National Food Administration's environmentally effective food choices

Proposal notified to the EU¹

Concerns the food groups:

Meat – beef, lamb, pork and chicken

Fish and shellfish

Fruits and berries, vegetables and leguminous plants

Potatoes, cereals and rice

Cooking fat

Water

1. The notification has been done in accordance with Directive 98/34/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 June 1998 laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical standards and regulations and of rules on information society services (OJ L 204, 21.7.1998, p. 37, Celex 31998L0034, as amended by European Parliament and Council Directive 98/48/EC (OJ L 217, 5.8.1998, p. 18 Celex 31998L0048.



NL Ministry of Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality June 2008

- *Policy Document on Sustainable Food: towards sustainable production and consumption of food*
http://www.minlnv.nl/portal/page?_pageid=116,1640321&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_file_id=39545
- Objectives
 - *Stimulating sustainable innovations in the Dutch agrifood complex*
 - *Enable and entice Dutch consumers to buy sustainable (and healthy) food*
 - *Influencing the international agenda*
- Approach:
 - voluntarism, information, innovation (GMOs), productivity, etc



UK Cabinet Office 2008 reports



Food: an analysis of the issues The Strategy Unit

January 2008

(Updated & re-issued August 2008)

This discussion paper presents an analysis of a number of the key issues pertaining to food and food policy in the UK. It is not a statement of Government policy

Food Matters Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century

The Strategy Unit
July 2008

Making
government
work better

Making
government
work better

Revision D – 8 August 2008

UK: varied government action

- Scotland
 - *Recipe for Success* (2008), *Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy* (2009)
- England
 - Council of Food Policy Advisors
 - Integrated Advice Scheme
 - Healthy Food Mark (DH, FSA, Defra)
 - Defra *Food 2030* (due 2010)
- Wales
 - *New Farming Strategy* (2008), *Quality of Food* (2008), *Appetite for Life* (2009), *Local Sourcing Action Plan* (2009)

Company actions

- 2008 Tesco gives £25m to University of Manchester Sustainable Consumption Institute
- 2007 IGD Food Industry Sustainability Strategy Champions Group focus on low carbon + ethics
- 2009 30 TNCs unite to launch own change drive
- ‘Green’ + ‘healthy’ foods compete for shelf space
- Motives:
 - Self interest, cost-cutting, long-termism, efficiency
- Difficulties: choice /choice-edit? Labels?

4. Defining ‘sustainable diet’: a core issue ahead

SDC project

- A scoping project – ie opening not final words
- Taking issue across gov't: DH, FSA, Defra, EA etc
- Contracted to Oxford University BHF HPG
- 3 processes:
 - Literature review
 - Stakeholder consultation
 - Review existing positions & interventions
- Developed a hierarchy of priorities
- Report done, consulted + Govt and sent to Defra
- Publish in a few weeks

Key findings

- There is no definition of ‘sustainable diet’ agreed but stakeholders see need for one
- Identified 10+ key guidelines for sustainable diets
- Reviewed 44 published academic research studies and reports
- Found more positive synergies (win-wins) than tensions (win-lose) eg
 - Lowering consumption of low nutritional value foods (fatty/sugary foods & drinks) has mainly +ve impacts on health, environment and reducing social inequalities.
- Found gaps in the evidence, most notably with respect to economic impacts of dietary changes.
- Produced a 3-level hierarchy of behavioural impact

Some of the framework guidelines identified

- Consume less food and drink
- Accept different notions of quality
- Accept variability of supply
- Shop on foot or over the internet
- Cook and store foods in energy conserving ways
- Prepare food for more than one person and for several days
- Reduce food waste
- Reduce consumption of meat and dairy products
- Reduce consumption of food and drinks with low nutritional value
- Reduce consumption of bottled water



Changes where health, environmental, economic and social impacts are likely to complement each other:

- Reduce consumption of meat & dairy products
- Reduce food & drink of low nutritional value (fatty, sugary foods + tea, coffee & alcohol)
- Reduce food waste.

Changes likely to have a significant positive sustainability impact, but where gains in one area might have a more negative impact elsewhere:

- Increase fruit & veg consumption, particularly seasonal and field grown
- Consume only fish from sustainable stocks
- Eat more foods produced with respect for wildlife & environment e.g. organic food

Changes making smaller contribution to dietary sustainability, with largely complementary effects across issues

- Reduce energy input by shopping on foot or over the internet
- Cook & store food in energy conserving ways
- Drinking tap water instead of bottled water

Reviewed practical initiatives

- Found 40 on sustainable food supply
 - From Government to local food growing projects
- Assessed 12 for the breadth of sustainability
- Only 3 initiatives had good sustainability scope
- Few had adequately evaluated possible impacts
- Some positive moves towards consistency for public sector caterers eg
 - *Healthier Food Mark* (DH, FSA, Defra)
 - *Food For Life* NGOs Lottery funded 2008-10

Recommendations include:

- DA(F) to oversee cross-Govt guidelines
 - Step 1: FSA *Eatwell Plate* become Sustainable Diet
 - Step 2: develop full sustainability guidance
- Defra, FSA, DAs
 - seek EU position
 - develop evidence on behaviour change
- Food Research Partnership explore ‘hotspots’
eg meat & dairy, fish, soy, palm
- Explore implications for consumer behaviour and supply chains

5. Looking ahead

Feed this into complex architecture

- multi-level:
 - local, sub-national, national, regional, global
- multi-agency
 - public, private & civil society
- rapid concentration of power over supply chains
 - intra and inter-national
- Complex influences:
 - laws, regulations, standards → twitter /media/hype

Address new ideological challenge

- Prices and cheapness vs eco systems support
- Choice vs choice-editing
- Coherent advice, eg fish – to eat it or not?
- Address fissure between Co.s and Govts
- Reshape food culture: eg
 - meat & dairy on feast days not everyday?
 - de-skilled consumers for low carbon living?



Different messages for different products at different sectors

Source: Sustainable Consumption Institute 2009 pg 22

The full carbon lifecycle of products giving examples of key "hot spots"



Re-think policy focus on choice



Ecological public health probably means this direction



Progress is conventionally defined as this direction



Governments should be prepared to use the full range of policy measures: ‘soft’ to ‘hard’

- Advice
- Labeling
- Education
- Public information
- Endorsements
- Welfare support
- Product standards
- Licensing
- Subsidies
- Competition rules
- Taxes & fiscal measures
- Bans
- Rationing

Support new business model

- Less focus on price...more on quality and means
- Industry creating its own standards
 - GlobalGAP, GFSI, SAI, etc
 - G30 top TNCs initiative October 16 2009 Coca-Cola, Tesco, Unilever, News International
- Some remarkable initiatives:
 - Marks & Spencer Plan A
 - Reduced GHG dairy initiatives eg WalMart-Asda; J Sainsbury
- Re-emergence of co-operation as framework:
 - TNCs G30 → box schemes / CSA → reinvention of Co-ops?



Conclusion

A new cultural direction emerges

- Priority is to cut down on meat & dairy (Stern)
- More plants (fruit and veg) = ‘win, win’
- Eat more locally, seasonably to be low carbon
- Get biodiversity into the field & onto the plate
- Build exercise into shopping (NL model)
- Support tap water not bottled drinks
- Accept price signals will change

Thanks