Session 8 – "Society and consumers"

The consumer aspects of future meat consumption presented by **Dr. Liisa Lähteenmäki**, Denmark

In food systems, sustainability and especially climate change are regarded as major environmental and social challenges that need to be addressed in order to produce the desired outcomes related to environment, food security and overall well-being of people. Consumers making changes in their food choices have been regarded as the major actors in achieving the required transformations as consumption and thereby demand is one of the drivers of food systems. However, putting consumers' food choices in the central position in driving the change tends to undermine the roles of other drivers and roles of other actors. Consumers need to change their behaviour but to enable the changes they need support from other actors. Furthermore, individuals acting in the roles of consumers or citizens may provide different roads to promote the changes required. Consumers' role and responsibility in making changes in their food-related behaviour will be discussed in relation to their decision-making processes and roles of other actors in enabling and supporting those changes. Food choices are built on personal food systems that result from interactions individuals have with their environment and culture. Furthermore, food-related behaviours are complex as they are influenced by physiology, environment, social factors and culture, but still the decisions are made with little effort as part of established household routines and habits. Household food provisioning systems and the role of different types of decisions made during the provisioning process have not gained as much attention in studies as the choice and purchase decisions, although they may be the bottlenecks in making the desired changes in the purchase decisions. Challenges in changing food-related behaviours is reflected on the current recommendations to reduce meat consumption which many food-based dietary guidelines have as a piece of advice to consumers on healthy and/or sustainable diets. The challenges are discussed in relation to the constraints consumers have in their food-related decisions and how the other actors in the food systems contribute to these challenges. Consumers need to be motivated to change their behaviours, but they also need the ability and opportunity to make these changes. Policy makers, food manufacturers, and retailers can contribute to the behaviour changes positively or negatively, or some of the decisions can be taken outside households and consumers' own decision domain. Meat reduction is an interesting behaviour because it targets a part in the diet that has been culturally highly valued and often most costly central piece in meals which now is demoted to become a part that should be restricted for health and sustainability reasons. This paper tries to explore how consumers negotiate this challenge in their own personal food systems and their household food provisioning systems.



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Liisa is professor in Consumer Behaviour and Food Choice at Aarhus University BSS and part of MAPP Centre. Liisa's background is in psychology and nutrition. She is currently working with factors influencing consumers' food choices with a special interest in acceptance of new innovations and the role of intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes in acceptance, as well as responsible and sustainable food-related behaviours (e.g. determinants of food waste in households) among consumers. Research interests include also communication challenges in the innovation processes and improving methods that can facilitate the integration of consumer insight in innovation processes. She has published over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles on consumer and food-related topics.