

The Ecology of Food Perception

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Our goal is to organize and stimulate broad stakeholder participation in discussions of *sustainable next generation approaches* to human food ecology. Stakeholders are consumers, food industry, policy-makers, health-care providers, educators, and more, while food ecology is a concept that connects eating behavior in humans and animals to biology and environment.

In the world today, consumer behavior and health are topics of immense public awareness and media interest, but despite that, food-related health problems continue to rise. The situation has proven difficult to control via public information about healthy consumer behavior and limits the continuation of ‘business as usual’ with respect to how consumers deal with their food environment.

Food environmental factors influence peoples’ food choice and consumption, and can be identified, tested and controlled during production and marketing to affect consumer behavior. This controllability, for example of food product selection, branding, placement and price, creates incentives for the food industry as well as for policy makers that aim to balance economic progress with the interests of public health.

Consumers evaluate foods for multiple and complex sensory and technical aspects such as perceived food quality, product packing, portion size, texture, color, taste and smell. But consumers can also take health, ethics and environmental concerns into account if information on raw materials, animal welfare, fair trade, carbon footprint and so on, is clearly presented. This is responsible consumer behavior.

We believe the public’s awareness about foods creates win-win opportunities: Innovative product development, labeling and retailer strategies leading to responsible consumer behavior paralleled by food industrial profits. We call such win-win scenarios *sustainable next generation approaches* to human food ecology, and invite all interested parties, the general public, private enterprises, government, legislature and the media, to join us in debate.