

# Narrowing gap in public health nutrition and food policy: The case of sustainable diets

Tim Lang  
Centre for Food Policy, City University London  
[t.lang@city.ac.uk](mailto:t.lang@city.ac.uk)

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# 1. The problem: policy-reality mismatch and distortion

- The idea of DGs or FBDGs
  - Set benchmarks for public and supply chains
- Not working:
  - Public is not following them
  - Food industry → ‘ultra-processed’ non-food foods
- DGs / FBDGs ignore environmental impacts
  - These are huge
- Policy-makers do not seem to care!
  - Policy – reality mismatch

## 2. Reasons for this problem

- It's so huge!
  - Problem of **Complexity**
- To address it means changing the food system + consuming culture
  - Problem of defining **Progress**
- No-one is championing the problem
  - Problem of lack of **Policy Coherence**
- Nutrition science is fragmented:
  - life sciences vs social vs environmental
  - Problem of **Fragmented Science**

# 3. Possible changes to narrow the gap

- a) new EU, national and local Sustainable Dietary Guidelines (SDGs)
- b) Metrics for a good food system & infrastructure
- c) Improved links between public health and environmental health = 'ecological public health nutrition'
- d) Organisational coalitions to campaign
- e) Environmental teaching in professions

# 4. Interventions & policy efforts

- *International experience of pushing for formal SDGs;*
  - Sweden (2008-15): rule anti Market by EFSA
  - UK (2008-10): abolished by new Govt
  - Australia (2010-12): beaten by meat lobby
  - USA (2014-15): beaten by meat lobby

# 4. Interventions (cont)

- *Experience of softer SustDiet advice:*
  - Germany CSD (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)
    - Expanded with each new edition
    - Logo based
  - UK carbon label:
    - Carbon Trust + PepsiCo – crisps
    - withdrawn
  - NL science committee –
    - Strong advice but uncertain central policy impact

# 4. Interventions (cont.)

- *Experience of civil society*
  - WWF One Planet Living / Livewell Plate
    - UK → Spain, Fr, S → global
  - Eating Better UK Coalition
    - 45 national organisations
  - Lifestyle experiments:
    - Vancouver 100 Mile Diet / Fife Diet
    - Driven by localism rather than hard data
    - Socially very interesting

# 5. Lessons learned

- Awareness is growing:
  - Rise of interest in Ecological Public Health
- Campaigns are growing:
  - ‘below radar’ allies: NGOs, industry (bits), science
  - Milan Urban Food Policy Pact commits to SDG  
[www.foodpolicymilan.org](http://www.foodpolicymilan.org)
- Data on case for change grow but no extensive change occurring ... yet
- Will it need a crisis?
  - We have one already but it's a **quiet crisis**



# Conclusions

- Optimism (despite sober indicators)
- Democratic experimentation is underway
- Food is complex (so what is new?)
- Inter-disciplinary indicators & research needed
- Sustainability cannot be achieved cheap
- This cannot be resolved incrementally
- It's system change