

Transforming Food Systems Under a Changing Climate

Changing diets and transforming food systems: key messages

Sonja Vermeulen¹, Toby Park², Colin K. Khoury³, Jonathan Mockshell³, Christophe Béné³, Huong Trinh Thi³, Brent Heard⁴ and Bee Wilson⁵

OCTOBER 2019

Both human health and staying under 2°C require changes in diets in all countries

1. Scientific analyses increasingly agree that staying below 2°C will require change in food systems—and in diets more than food waste or agricultural production methods.
2. In terms of human health, dietary change is needed to tackle hunger and under-nutrition (on the rise again globally) as well as obesity (overweight people outnumber underweight people, including in low- and middle-income countries) and micro-nutrient deficiencies.

Healthiness and sustainability are compatible, but there's a big gap between current diets and healthy diets

3. In theory, healthy diets for all are possible within Earth's environmental limits. Everyone eating healthily would have happy side effects for the global climate.
4. People fall short of, or overshoot, a basic healthy diet in different ways. Some food groups, such as wholegrain cereals, vegetables, fruit and nuts, should be eaten in greater quantities by almost everybody (Figure 1). For other food groups, such as

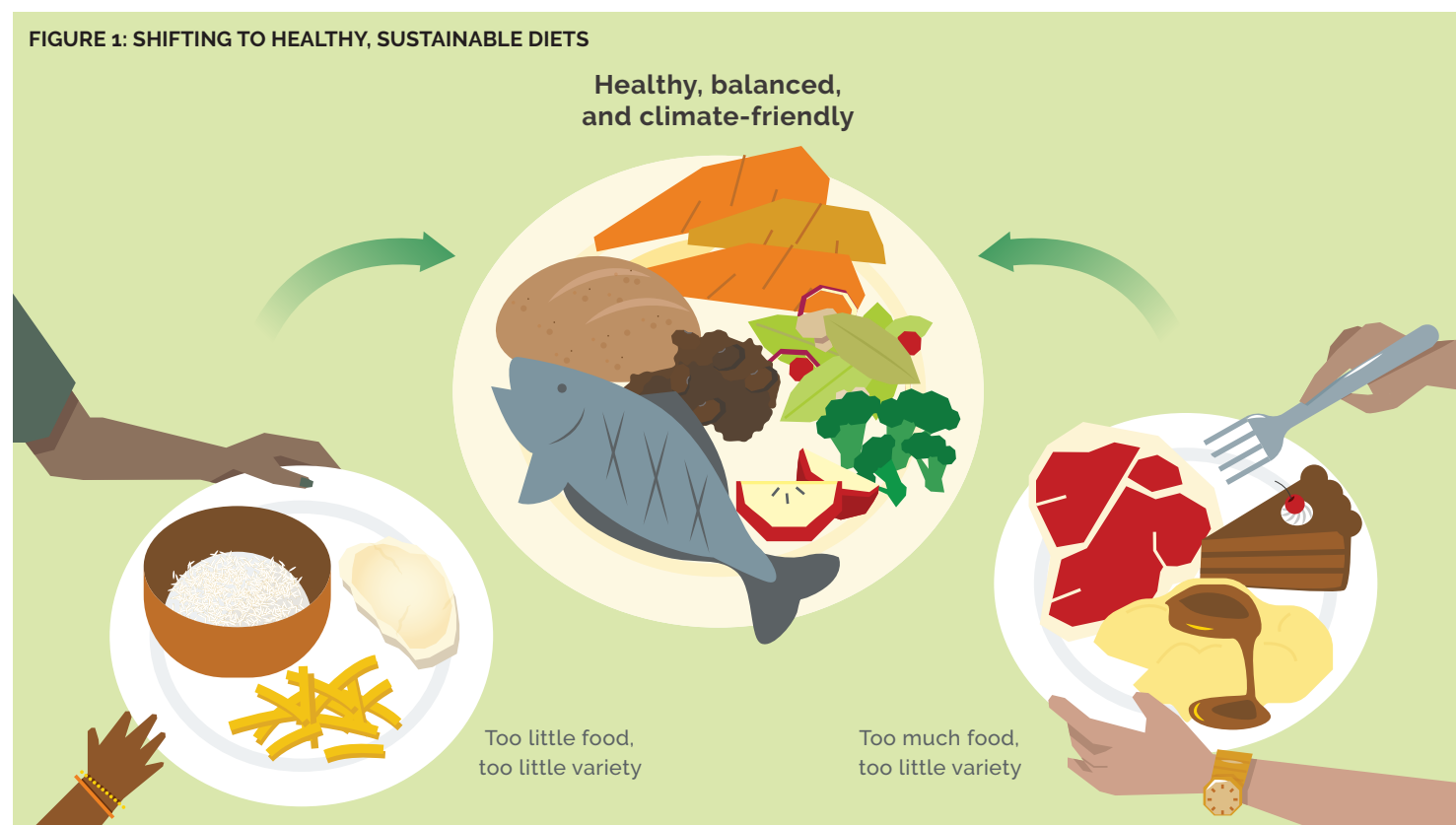
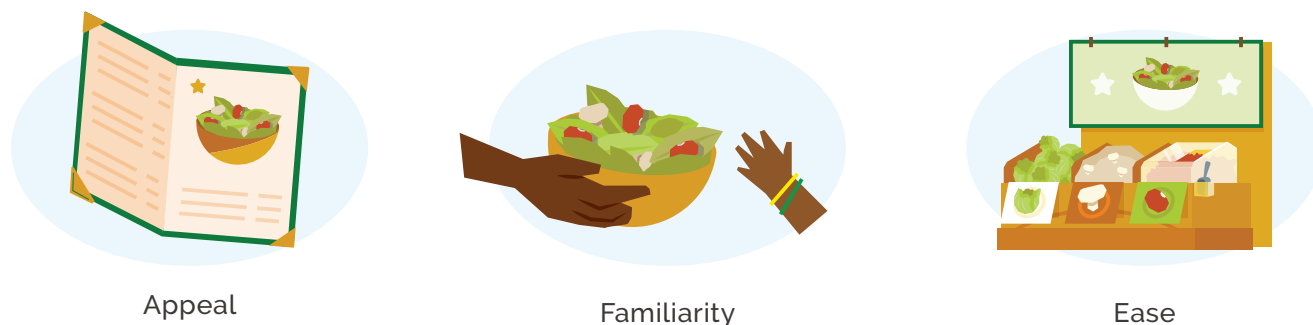


FIGURE 2: KEY FACTORS IN CONSUMERS' DIETARY CHOICES



animal products, many poorer people, especially women and children, would benefit from increased consumption. But for most wealthy consumers, substantial decreases in intake are needed to deliver benefits, particularly for climate.

Diets are in constant flux across all cultures and countries

5. The historic dynamism of people's diets raises hope that future change is likely. Many foods considered normal, or even traditional, in various cultures today were rare or unknown a century ago.
6. Today almost all people around the world are eating a greater quantity and diversity of food than their grandparents did. Diets are also becoming more similar across countries.

Behavioural insights can help to shift consumers towards positive dietary choices

7. People's daily "food environments" play a huge role in determining the dietary choices we make, and what we learn in childhood strongly shapes our long-term preferences.
8. Conventional approaches to enabling people to eat better diets have relied on information and awareness-raising. Recent behavioral research shows that healthy and sustainable foods are more likely to be widely eaten if they are made more appealing (in terms of cost, taste, convenience and enjoyment), more normal (familiar and mainstream) and easier (prevalent, and where possible the automatic or default choice) (Figure 2).

Dietary change involves changes across the whole food system

9. To create food environments where healthy and sustainable foods are the appealing, normal and easy choice, we need major changes in the "what" and the "how" of growing, processing and sale of food—underpinned by clear economic incentives for agrifood industries and consumers alike.
10. Current regulations and subsidies encourage over-availability of under-nourishing food; future policies could aim to price environmental impacts within food prices, with subsidies then aimed at increasing affordability of healthy diets among poor people.
11. Wider issues of political economy, such as women's access to education and to family planning, or the overall willingness of governments to regulate industry, may prove pivotal.

Front-running governments, civil society organizations and business are demonstrating that incentives for dietary change could reach scale if given the chance

12. No serious joined-up effort has yet been made in any country to shift diets in the interests of human and planetary health.
13. But front-runners among national governments, city governments and social movements are providing inspirational examples and leadership—taking action on dietary change that goes beyond mere awareness-raising towards more concrete incentives and enablers.

Read the working paper: http://bit.ly/TFSI_Diets

Author affiliations

1) CGIAR System Organization; 2) Behavioural Insights Team; 3) International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT); 4) University of Michigan; 5) independent journalist.

About the Transforming Food Systems Under a Changing Climate Initiative

This briefing is part of Transforming Food Systems Under a Changing Climate, an initiative led by the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) that aims to realize a transformation in food systems by mobilizing knowledge and catalyzing action. The initiative brings together leaders in science, business, farming, policy and grassroots organizations to identify pathways for transformation. To find additional publications in this series and for more information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/TransformingFood>.

About the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS)

CCAFS brings together some of the world's best researchers in agricultural science, development research, climate science and Earth system science, to identify and address the most important interactions, synergies and tradeoffs between climate change, agriculture and food security. CCAFS is led by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and is carried out with support from the CGIAR Trust Fund and through bilateral funding agreements. For details please visit <http://ccafs.cgiar.org/donors>.