



A reflection on the food environment

CDG Animal Products, 25 May 2022

European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)

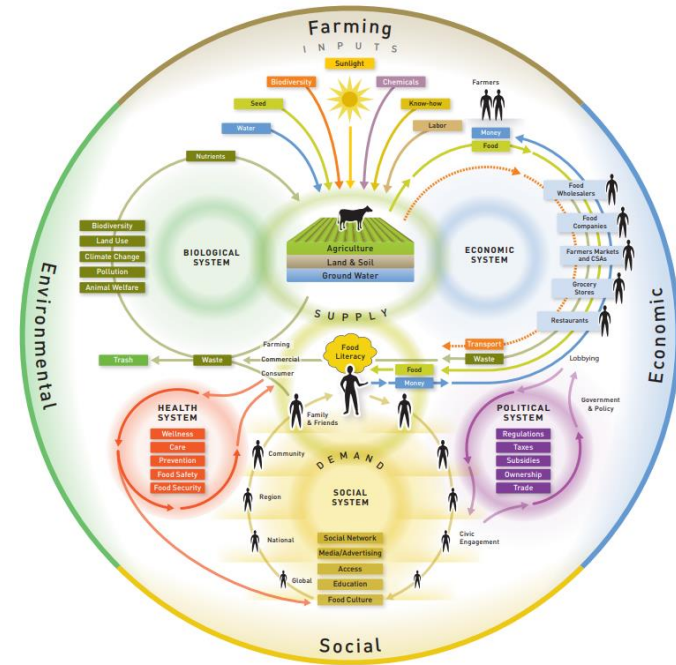
A leading European civil society alliance in Brussels, made up of 80 public health NGOs, patient groups, health professionals and disease groups, working to improve health and strengthen the voice of public health in Europe.

*EPHA is a change agent in the public interest,
independent from commercial funding.*



Food systems & health

European food system



TABLE, [What are food systems?](#)

Food-health dimensions (impact channels)

Diets

Food safety

Antimicrobial resistance

Climate change

Air quality

Chemicals

Non-food borne infectious agents

Socio-economic factors

Occupational factors

Biodiversity

Health impacts (Europe & global) Uncertainties & future health impacts?

Positive impacts
(physical, mental,
social well-being)

Non-communicable diseases

Communicable diseases

Injuries

Premature mortality



Drawing on: [IPES Food \(2017\)](#), [TEEB \(2018\)](#).



Food-related health impacts: highlights

Global food system: **21–37%**
of total anthropogenic
greenhouse gas emission
([IPCC, 2019](#))

Clear evidence linking
antibiotics use in animal
agriculture to **antibiotic
resistant infections** in
humans ([AMR Review, 2015](#))

EU: 53% of population
overweight or obese and
17% **obese**
([Eurostat](#))

Agriculture emissions: major
contributor to **PM2.5
formation** and air pollution
associated health harms in
Europe
([Lelieveld et al., 2015](#))

Agricultural drivers
associated with more than
**50% of zoonotic infectious
diseases** in humans since
1940
([Rohr et al., 2019](#))



Shifting to sustainable healthy diets

Sustainable healthy diets: “diets ... high in plant-sourced and low in animal-sourced and processed foods.”

“... consistent evidence of both positive health effects and reduced environmental footprints accruing from 'sustainable diets'.”

Jarmul et al. (2020) "[Climate change mitigation through dietary change: a systematic review of empirical and modelling studies on the environmental footprints and health effects of 'sustainable diets'](#)." *Environmental Research Letters*

Are current contexts enabling such a dietary shift?



Planetary health diet (based on EAT-Lancet Commission)



'Food environments'



Food environments: “physical, economic, political and socio-cultural context in which consumers engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food” (HLPE)

A vision for enabling food environments

“Creating enabling food environments means ensuring that foods, beverages and meals that contribute to sustainable healthy diets are the most available, accessible, affordable, pleasurable and widely promoted.

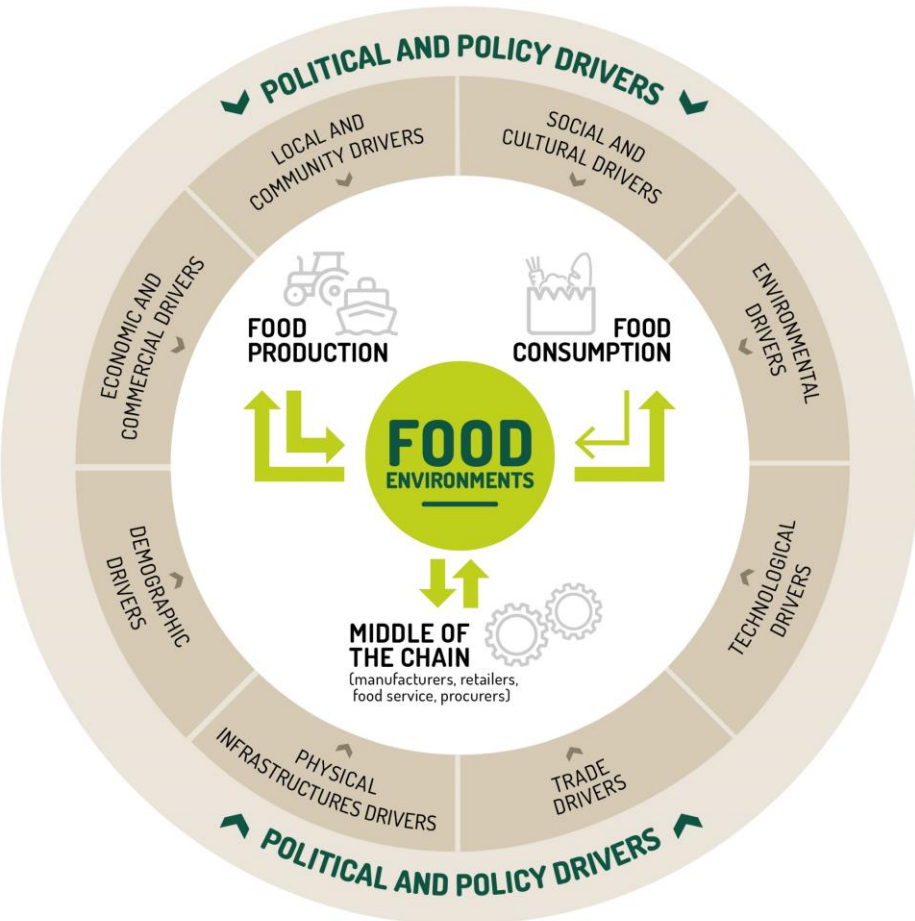
Such environments make the healthy and sustainable choice the default and most desirable choice, while limiting the availability and promotional opportunities for foods associated with unhealthy and unsustainable diets.

Sustainable food environments, furthermore, drive demand for socially just supply chains and production models that work with nature, rather than against it, that are climate-proof, and that take high levels of animal welfare as their starting point.”



At the heart of the food system

THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT AS AN INTERFACE
BETWEEN PEOPLE AND FOOD SYSTEMS



1 **FOOD CHAIN DYNAMICS** - the main focus of this briefing, and particularly referring to:

A **'Food entry points'**, or the settings in which foods are made available and purchased, such as supermarkets, neighbourhood shops, local markets, digital apps, direct farm sales, canteens, schools, (fast food) restaurants, street food stalls, social dining places, etc.

B The **foods, beverages and meals** themselves that are made available, and are accessible, affordable and desirable as people go about their everyday lives.

2 ASPECTS OF THE **BUILT ENVIRONMENT** that affect access to food entry points, including the distance to food outlets, the availability of physical infrastructures to access such entry points, such as public transport networks, etc.

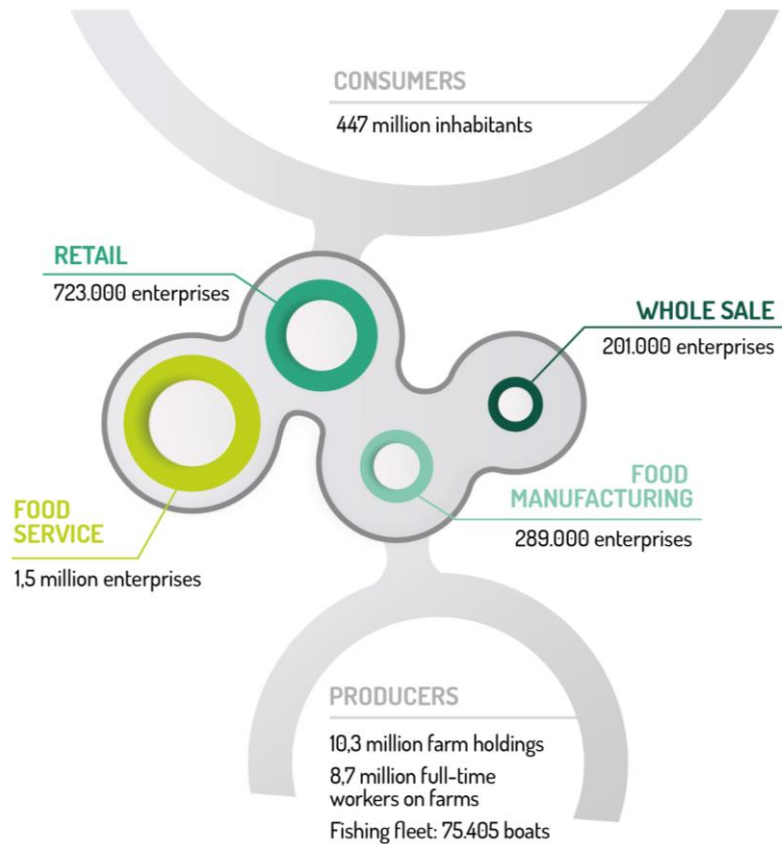
3 **PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS** that influence food choices, including levels of income and education, attitudes, cultural values, skills, etc.

4 THE **POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS** in which the above aspects are embedded.



Middle of the chain: intervention point

THE MIDDLE OF THE FOOD CHAIN AS A STRATEGIC INTERVENTION POINT (FIGURES FOR EU-27)



7 ENTRY POINTS FOR ACTION

FOOD CHARACTERISTICS/PROPERTIES

FOOD LABELLING

FOOD PROMOTION

FOOD PROVISION

FOOD RETAIL

FOOD PRICES

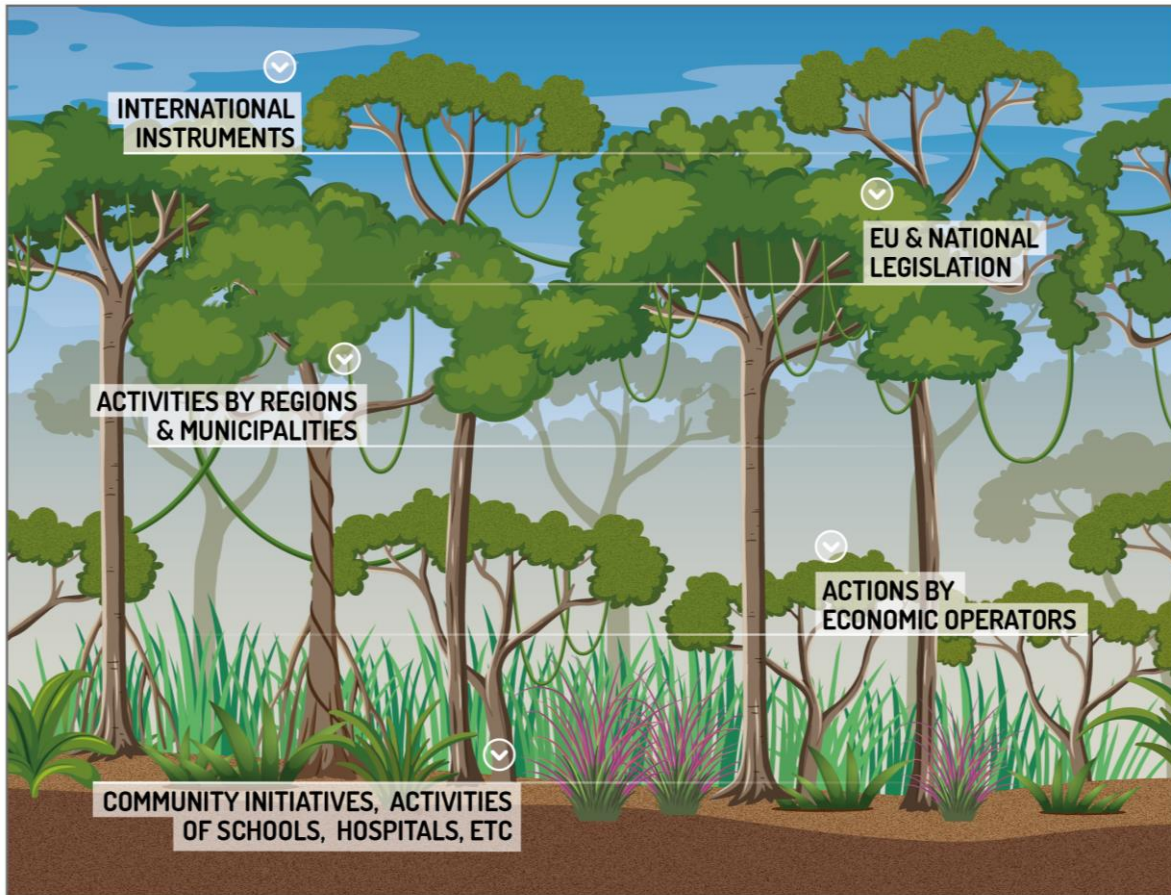
FOOD TRADE & INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

based on INFORMAS



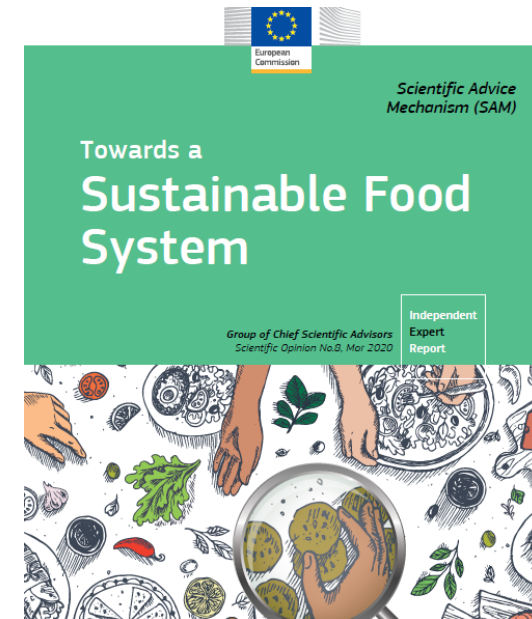
Multi-level action, driven by regulation

A MULTI-LAYERED 'ECOSYSTEM' OF ACTIVITIES, WITH REGULATORY POLICIES AS FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS



[EU Food Policy Coalition](#)

*“Voluntary initiatives (...) can be very helpful. However, evidence shows they must **not be relied upon as the sole or main drivers of change** as an alternative to binding measures.”*



[EU Group of Chief Scientific Advisors \(2020\)](#)



Food environments into EU legislation

7 ENTRY POINTS	TYPES OF MEASURES
FOOD CHARACTERISTICS/ PROPERTIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foods placed on the EU market conform to the highest possible health, labour, climate, environmental, and animal welfare standards. Processes are in place to regularly review standards upwards and introduce new ones when required.
FOOD LABELLING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achievement: labels applied to the packages of foods shall make the nutritionally healthier and more sustainable choices easily and transparently identifiable.• EU-wide mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labelling scheme & sustainable food labelling framework.
FOOD PROMOTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achievement: only those foods that contribute to sustainable food systems can be promoted across EU (e.g. promotion policy).• EU legislation to effectively tackle child exposure to unhealthy food marketing.
FOOD PROVISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EU-wide minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement.
FOOD RETAIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National action plans for healthy food retail (shops, restaurants etc.).
FOOD PRICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achievement: ensure that prices of food account for their true cost and value in light of current health and other sustainability challenges• EU Directive on taxation of soft drinks and sugary foods.• Achievement: access to healthy, sustainable diets is ensured for everyone across the EU.
FOOD TRADE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achievement: import standards are set at equivalent levels as the environmental, social, health and animal welfare standards in the EU.





Thank you!

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