



**CONSUMERS
INTERNATIONAL**
COMING TOGETHER
FOR CHANGE

HOW CONSUMER
ORGANISATIONS
CAN CONTRIBUTE TO

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food is one of the most important areas of work for consumer organisations, with 86% of our membership working on food, or planning to.

From ensuring nutritional labelling on food packaging, highlighting unsafe food through testing, or campaigning against junk food marketing to children, across the world consumer organisations have driven forward better practice in food systems.

Consumer organisations are ideally placed to represent the consumer voice in food policy and practice. They have an in-depth understanding of the communities and people they represent and can use the cross-cutting nature of their work to build a systemic and holistic approach to the issue of food. They are authoritative, respected experts on consumer issues with wide-reaching networks.

And there are urgent changes which need to be made. [Two billion people globally](#) are overweight or obese, over [600 million people](#) fall ill due to unsafe food each year and [one in nine people](#) in the world are undernourished.

These issues must be addressed at a time when there is growing demand for food and an urgent need to transition to a low-carbon system that protects biodiversity.

Consumer protection and empowerment is a key component to solving these challenges, now and in the future as food systems evolve.

The eight consumer rights, developed by the consumer movement and reflected in the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection, are core to this work. Consumers' rights to the satisfaction of basic needs, to safety, to be informed, to be able to choose, to live in a healthy environment, are all important rights to apply to food systems.

As innovations such as lab-grown meat, blockchain, food traceability and increasingly digitalised agriculture become more common around the world, consumer organisations are adapting to understand these new technologies and play a part in their positive development. **How can consumer organisations influence the development of these innovations?**

Given consumer organisations' knowledge and experience of food issues they are well placed to represent the consumer voice as emerging trends and technologies change food systems around the world.

They have the capability to work with other actors, including industry, to maximise the opportunities that technology offers and address problems before they reach the marketplace.

As the membership organisation for over 200 consumer groups in over 100 countries, Consumers International will lead and support our members to respond to the traditional challenges of hunger and food safety, at the same time as understanding how technology can create better, more sustainable food systems for the future.

This backgrounder aims to generate conversations amongst our members and stakeholders and asks **how consumer groups can best contribute to creating fairer, safer and more sustainable food systems?**

Methodology

The information contained in this background report has been sourced from an exploratory survey of Consumers International's membership carried out between February and April 2018, along with desk and expert research and case studies from our membership.



INTRODUCTION



The world's food system does not currently meet its aim of providing nutritious, safe, accessible, available and affordable food to consumers, that has been sustainably produced, as defined by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2¹ and 12². The system has resulted in two billion people globally who are overweight or obese³, over 600 million people who have fallen ill due to unsafe food each year⁴ and one in nine people in the world who are undernourished⁵. One third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year — approximately 1.3 billion tonnes — gets lost or wasted.⁶ Food production, especially animal agriculture, is causing high energy consumption, deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions, and excessive water use.^{7 8} 60% of our plastic, much of which comes from the food industry, ends up in landfills or our environment.⁹

These challenges are exacerbated by the fact that by 2030 we will need to feed an additional one billion people, whilst making urgent changes to production and consumption patterns to address the climate emergency, loss of biodiversity and air, land and marine pollution.

At the same time, digitalisation and new technology are raising new issues for all aspects of the food supply chain, a factor not adequately addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁰

Understanding the impacts of new technology is crucial to achieving sustainability. Reaching sustainability demands a vision into the future, and awareness that the future will be digitalised.

Policy makers, academics and other experts working at the international level have increasingly acknowledged the need to think more systemically, more globally and more sustainably when it comes to food. The International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems¹¹ in 2015, called for a more transdisciplinary science of sustainable food systems:

“Indeed, the knowledge generated and held by farmers, fishers, forest dwellers, food industry workers, cooperatives, consumer groups, civil society movements, indigenous populations and a whole range of other actors is one of the greatest untapped resources in the quest to reform food systems. What is needed is not merely a transmission of knowledge from scientists to policy makers, but rather a multi-directional flow of knowledge between the worlds of science, policy and practice, with each part of the nexus informed by the other two.”

1 UN, Sustainable Development Goals, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/

2 UN, Sustainable Development Goal 12, www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg12

3 UN, Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/

4 FAO, Food Safety, www.fao.org/food-safety/en/

5 UN, Goal 2: Zero Hunger, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/

6 FAO, SAVE FOOD: Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction, www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/

7 EAT-Lancet Commission Summary Report, www.eatforum.org/eat-lancet-commission/eat-lancet-commission-summary-report/

8 UN, Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/

9 UN Environment, interactive plastic page, www.unenvironment.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/

10 IISAD, SDG Knowledge Hub, [HLPF Side Event Explores Impacts of Digital Revolution on Sustainable Development](http://HLPF%20Side%20Event%20Explores%20Impacts%20of%20Digital%20Revolution%20on%20Sustainable%20Development)

11 IPES, 2015, The New Science of Sustainable Food Systems www.ipes-food.org/images/Reports/IPES_report01_1505_web_br_pages.pdf

INTRODUCTION CONTINUED



What is a consumer organisation?

Every consumer organisation that is a member of Consumers International has, as a primary objective, the protection and promotion of the eight consumer rights that are set out on the next page. In addition, they are independent organisations, free from commercial or political influence, so that they can represent consumers as economic actors, without any conflict of interest.

Many consumer organisations have developed a close understanding of consumer issues through the provision of services directly to consumers, including complaints handling, representing consumers in disputes and providing consumer education and awareness. Aside from the direct benefits that these services deliver for consumers, this hands-on experience of consumer issues also makes them both very well informed and respected organisations in discussions with agencies and governments.

Many members have considerable expertise in their topic area, either through the staff they employ or through voluntary networks, often including academic departments in local universities. These organisations have frequently built very strong and effective connections with relevant government agencies, regulators and national standards bodies and are very effective at influencing change.

Although consumer organisations have many shared aims and objectives, there is considerable variety in terms of their size and focus, both within countries and between countries.

Consumer organisations have a variety of funding models, ranging from the more established organisations that have built a model based on the independent testing of products and services and publishing the results, to government-funded, independent consumer organisations, to consumer co-operatives to organisations that rely on membership fees and voluntary contributions. The resources available to consumer organisations tend to reflect the income of the country with the largest organisations to be found in high-income countries in Europe, North America, and Asia Pacific. Large consumer organisations will work across a range of consumer issues whilst smaller organisations will tend to either focus on a small number of issues or provide a particular service to consumers.

Most Consumers International members work on food in some way. In the member survey undertaken for this report, 86% of Consumers International members told us that they were working on, or planning to work on food issues.

Consumers International itself has worked on food issues for almost sixty years, campaigning and advocating on issues, such as the marketing of unhealthy food to children, better nutrition information and reductions in the levels of fat, sugar and salt in food. We have also advocated for reductions in the use of antibiotics in farming through our #antibioticsoffthemenue campaign, and provide a consumer voice in the development of international food standards through our work with Codex Alimentarius (the international food standards body).

As an NGO in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO), and through an MoU with the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), we are working to make sure that consumers are represented in global health governance.



Photo taken from Green Action Week 2019



About Consumers International

Consumers International is the membership organisation for consumer groups around the world. We believe in a world where everyone has access to safe and sustainable goods and services. We bring together over 200 member organisations in more than 100 countries to empower and champion the rights of consumers everywhere.

We are their voice in international policy-making forums and the global marketplace to ensure they are treated safely, fairly and honestly. We are resolutely independent, unconstrained by businesses or political parties.

We work in partnership and exercise our influence with integrity, tenacity and passion to deliver tangible results.

CONSUMERS
INTERNATIONAL HAS OVER
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The Eight Consumer Rights

- **The right to satisfaction of basic needs** - To have access to basic, essential goods and services: adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, public utilities, water and sanitation.
- **The right to safety** - To be protected against products, production processes and services that are hazardous to health or life.
- **The right to be informed** - To be given the facts needed to make an informed choice, and to be protected against dishonest or misleading advertising and labelling.
- **The right to choose** - To be able to select from a range of products and services, offered at competitive prices with an assurance of satisfactory quality.
- **The right to be heard** - To have consumer interests represented in the making and execution of government policy, and in the development of products and services.
- **The right to redress** - To receive a fair settlement of just claims, including compensation for misrepresentation, low standard goods or unsatisfactory services.
- **The right to consumer education** - To acquire knowledge and skills needed to make informed, confident choices about goods and services, while being aware of basic consumer rights and responsibilities and how to act on them.
- **The right to a healthy environment** - To live and work in an environment that is non-threatening to the well-being of present and future generations.

INTRODUCTION

CONTINUED

What do we mean by sustainable food systems?

Policy makers, academics and other experts are increasingly thinking about food in more global, systemic, and sustainability terms. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are one of the major political manifestations of this. The second of the 17 SDGs relates directly to food, specifically ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO):

“Food systems encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of agri-food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded.”¹²

The increasingly globalised nature of our food supply chains makes it hard to think of sustainable food only in terms of national systems. For example, a food poisoning outbreak in Germany in 2011, revealed, after months of investigation, to be connected to fenugreek seed sprouts;

“the contaminated sprouts, had been grown and packaged in Egypt, shipped by boat to Belgium, carried by barge to the Netherlands, and trucked to Germany, where the shipment was subdivided and sent to 11 other countries.”¹³

As consumer organisations focus on the consumption end of the food process, promoting sustainable diets for example, this can have knock-on benefits along the food system. The FAO describes sustainable diets as:

“Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources.”

The essential and complicated role consumers play in food systems

Consumers are a key component of sustainable food systems. Every human is a consumer of food, but no one is just a consumer. Consumers are also citizens, taxpayers, workers, parents. They are also not just passive receivers; they can enable and drive change with their collective economic power.

Consumers are increasingly demanding more transparency, and higher ethical standards from food producers, a trend driven by millennials.¹⁴

Consumer trust has a big role to play, particularly in food safety but also in relation to nutrition. According to IPES-Food:

“The distrust of consumers towards food producers and food regulators, and the political and regulatory responses to that distrust, are therefore key factors in establishing dynamics within modern food systems and must be central to a holistic food system analysis.”¹⁵



12 FAO, Climate Smart Agriculture Sourcebook <http://www.fao.org/climate-smart-agriculture-sourcebook/production-resources/module-b10-value-chains/chapter-b10-2/en/>

13 [National Geographic, Food Poisoning: An Untrackable Illness In A Globalized World, www.nationalgeographic.com/science/phenomena/2015/04/08/global-food-plate/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/phenomena/2015/04/08/global-food-plate/)

14 The Washington Post, '9 ways millennials are changing the way we eat', 21 Feb 2018

15 2015, International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems, *The Case for a New Science of Sustainable Food Systems* www.ipes-food.org/images/Reports/IPES_report01_1505_web_br_pages.pdf

WHAT ARE THE DRIVERS FOR SUSTAINABLE DIETS?

In order to be a part of, or contribute to, sustainable food systems, consumers need to eat sustainable diets. Some key drivers for sustainable diets include:

Affordability is key

When it comes to consumer choice, most consumer organisations felt that cost was the main purchase trigger for consumers. In most countries, environmental and ethical concerns are seen as the preserve of wealthier consumers. Putting nutritious, safe food on the table is a bigger priority for many. Making sustainable food more affordable and accessible would have the greatest impact on consumer behaviour. This is borne out by consumer surveys and policy impact. For instance, a 2017 survey of consumers in three of the world's richest countries, Germany, USA and UK, found that 'quality,' and 'value for money' came out as the most important attributes for food products in all three countries.¹⁶ Only German consumers ranked 'sustainability/eco-friendliness' above 'brand' and 'low price.' In 2015, a report by Wiggins and Keats for Overseas Development Institute (ODI)¹⁷ found that in high-income countries, the cost of healthy food had increased, whereas the cost of highly processed foods high in fat, sugar and salt had decreased relatively; and that the same appeared to be happening in emerging economies. Evidence from countries that have used taxes to decrease consumption of unhealthy foods, or subsidies to increase consumption of healthy foods suggests that this is an effective policy tool and that price therefore is a strong driver. **Should financial subsidies or penalties be introduced to encourage the purchase of more sustainable food?**

When consumers do consider sustainability, they tend to think about environmental impact, rather than applying the broad definition used by the FAO and others.

Education, gender and age

Besides income, consumer organisations felt that levels of formal education (school, college) and access to information are likely to affect consumer concerns.

Much work by consumer organisations has an element of consumer education or provision of information to help consumers make more informed choices.

Gender is also important. Women often buy food for the family, and their engagement with maternity services can create opportunities for nutrition education. Young people may have more potential to change behaviour and are also more likely to think about sustainability in the first place. Consumer organisations will sometimes target specific groups of consumers, such as the example in the next section from the Consumer Education and Research Centre (CERC) whose project on organic food included awareness-raising public campaigns and workshops about organic farming with students, university staff and local women.

Improve the policy context

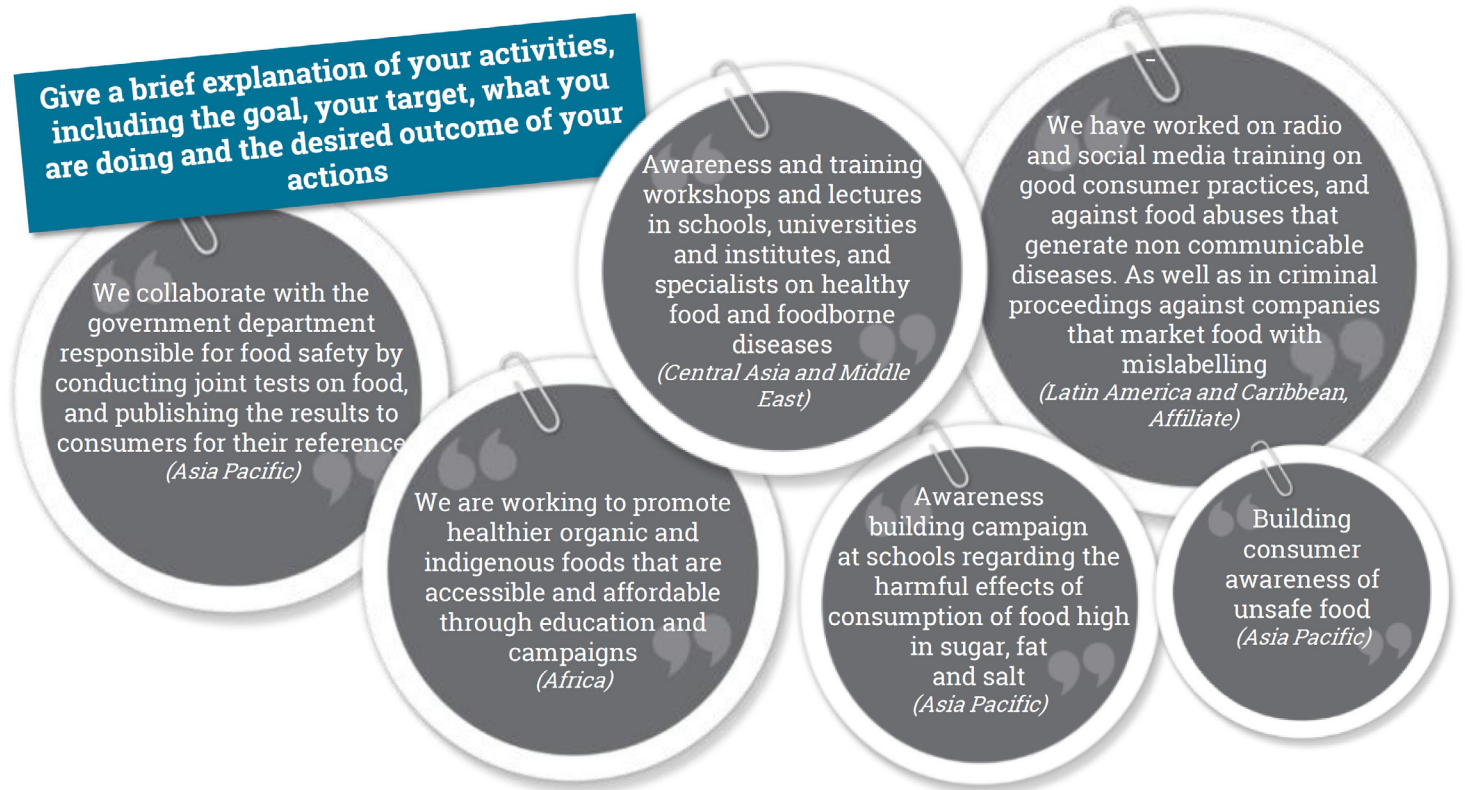
While consumer choices are significant, they are not enough on their own to make the transformative changes necessary for sustainable outcomes in food systems. Health and sustainability also need to be higher priorities for policy makers and governments need to be willing to regulate if necessary. **Should we adjust the policy definition of sustainable diets to include the right to food, as some of our members have proposed?** This definition has been worked into Brazilian national policy on food security and nutrition.¹⁸ The specific objectives of the policy include the development of programs and activities that respect, protect, promote and provide the human right to adequate food. This includes procurement policies for schools and other public institutions. Controls on marketing and fiscal incentives or subsidies, can also be effective policy levers for producers.

16 Statista, Which of the following product features are of particular importance to you when buying food? (country comparison) www.statista.com/statistics/693433/consumers-importance-of-different-food-product-features-by-country/

17 2015, Wiggins & Keats, The Rising Cost of a Healthy Diet, www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9580.pdf

18 FAO, Brazil adopts a new Policy on Food Security and Nutrition, www.fao.org/right-to-food/news/detail-events/en/c/44945/

WHAT METHODS DO CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS CURRENTLY USE TO CONTRIBUTE TO MORE SUSTAINABLE FOOD



Consumer organisations adopt a variety of relevant methods to work proactively in food systems, from awareness raising and consumer education, to partnership, campaigning and advocacy towards governments or the corporate sector. Our members are increasingly seeing the value of working not only at a local level, but regionally or globally.

WHAT METHODS DO CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS CURRENTLY USE TO CONTRIBUTE TO MORE SUSTAINABLE FOOD

CONTINUED

Consumer organisations have a unique and valuable perspective to offer, as we look to the future of food systems. Consumer organisations understand the key actors in the food system, the levers for change and consumers' needs and wants. Consumer groups enjoy an advantage from the cross-cutting nature of their work. Working in a range of areas builds transferable knowledge and skills and allows for a more systemic approach to food. As technology changes food systems around the world consumer organisations are also developing their understanding of these changes and working with stakeholders across the system to maximise the benefits for consumers.

Advocacy and representation

Consumer organisations work to directly influence decision makers at all levels of government and business. Internationally, Consumers International represents its members at UN institutions, for example through its special relations status with the World Health Organization and an MoU with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Direct international representation can be complemented by our members working with their own national delegations.

For example, Consumers International is an official observer at Codex Alimentarius, meaning that it is able to attend meetings, make submissions and participate in electronic working groups. Some Consumers International members attend Codex meetings as Consumers International representatives. Some members communicate regularly with national Codex contact points and exert influence via their own government.

This work on standards is an important part of how we work on food. Consumers International and its members also work with ISO and participate as members of ISO COPOLCO's Chair Advisory Group, which works to ensure the consumer voice is projected into ISO's general strategy and work.

Using digital tools

Consumer organisations also increasingly use digital tools to support their advocacy, campaigning, research and awareness activities. Many organisations are active on social media, and create apps to help consumers access information about nutrition, prices and the environmental impact of food.

Evidence and testing

Consumer organisations' background in independent testing, understanding the market and having a strong evidence base for campaigns, is essential to consumer advocacy. This may consist of identifying gaps in evidence needed or producing their own evidence. Commonly used means of producing evidence are testing of products or policies and market surveys.

Insight into consumer behaviour

Consumer surveys may be quantitative or qualitative and may take place face-to-face, online or over the phone. Focus groups are also used for more in-depth qualitative work (see example from Which? UK on public understanding of sustainability).

Market research or mystery shopping is sometimes used to understand the market from a consumer's point of view. Consumer organisations also work as knowledge brokers, collating evidence produced by others and making sure that policy makers are aware of it.



Consumer Protection Lebanon

WHAT METHODS DO CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS CURRENTLY USE TO CONTRIBUTE TO MORE SUSTAINABLE FOOD

CONTINUED

Consumer empowerment and education

Empowering and educating consumers happens through campaigning work but also through programmes that work directly with consumers. For example many members go into schools to educate children on healthy diets, or produce materials in collaboration with governments.

Consumer organisations also work to empower and educate actors further up the food system, for example food hygiene education for street food vendors. As noted earlier though, although education is necessary, it is rarely enough on its own. Consumer organisations are wary of solutions that put too much emphasis on consumer education when action by regulators or companies may be more effective in resolving the issue.

Building alliances

Consumer organisations are particularly good at building alliances with other parts of civil society including other NGOs and academics.

Consumers International worked with a network of NGOs and academics to develop, publish and promote [*Recommendations Towards a Global Convention to Protect and Promote Healthy Diets*](#). Our partners included the World Obesity Federation and the then UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter.

Increasingly consumer groups are engaging with industry to find constructive ways to address challenges. Consumers International is doing this through our Change Network, bringing together a global group of diverse organisations from civil society, governments and business, to tackle specific consumer challenges and opportunities faster, alongside our members.



What food issues will we be dealing with in ten years' time? The following is based on a brainstorming session at the workshop Consumers International held in Ghana with members from across the world to inform this report.

Environmental pressures featured heavily in discussions. Shortages of water and land for food production, along with depletion of fish stocks, will impact food security. Increased production of cash crops, and contamination caused by non sustainable farming practices and climate change will add to the pressure. Biodiversity is expected to decrease.

Malnutrition in all of its forms is worsening. Non-communicable diseases (NCD) are on the rise everywhere and growing fastest in low- and middle-income countries, where diets are changing rapidly. Fortification was discussed as a means of addressing malnutrition, along with potential disadvantages in terms of encouraging consumption of foods associated with NCDs.

The recent trend for increased concentration of power and wealth within the global food system is expected to continue. A handful of companies already control a large proportion of the production and movement of food across the world.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN FOOD SYSTEMS

It is essential for consumer groups to engage with innovation and new technologies in food production, retail and consumption if future systems are to meet consumers' needs. Technology has an important role to play in reducing the environmental impact of food production and consumption as well as supporting consumers to choose healthier diets. **How can the different actors in the food systems work together to ensure this technology meets consumers' needs and earn their trust?**

The digitalisation of food shopping has numerous benefits for consumers in terms of choice, convenience, and competitive pricing. Perhaps the biggest gain has been for consumers who are unable to access physical stores due to disability or old age. Yet the perishable nature of food products means that the shift to online shopping has not been as strong as in other retail sectors. Its prevalence varies from country to country, with geography and population density important factors alongside income levels and internet penetration.

Online shopping creates space for new practices, such as tailored advertising or dynamic pricing, where retailers can change the price of food more frequently to manage demand. This has the potential to reduce waste and environmental impact by setting prices closer to the real cost of a product or reducing costs when a product is close to its best before date. However, in a context where prices are continually fluctuating, it can reduce transparency and the ability to compare prices. Consumer groups can play an important role in monitoring such practices, to ensure they remain fair and competitive. **How can dynamic pricing be fair but reduce waste?**

Collection of big data and personalised data relating to consumers' shopping and eating habits through online shopping, loyalty schemes, and credit cards creates opportunities to learn more about our collective and individual purchasing patterns. This information can be used to improve the consumer experience by offering health and sustainability-based advice and recommendations, such as recipe ideas or carbon footprint data, with some supermarkets already testing such practices.

However, the collection of so much potentially sensitive data raises serious privacy concerns. To manage this risk, it is crucial that retailers have strict data protection policies. **What data are consumers happy to share and under what terms?**

The collection of data could be used to drive impulse buying or even lead to personalised pricing, where individual prices are calculated based on what people have bought before, where they live or even what type of device they are using, often without the consumer's knowledge. Depending on the retailers' aim, this can enable retailers to target groups with discounts and offers, but there is a risk that it could disadvantage lower-spending consumers who are not the retailers' priority.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN FOOD SYSTEMS CONTINUED

Distributed Ledger Technologies such as blockchain have the potential to improve product traceability and create more transparent, efficient food supply chains. Integrating blockchain into product traceability systems and supply chain management could help tackle food fraud more efficiently, identify traceability or sustainability gaps, increase the precision and speed of product recalls, and improve wages and working conditions. Particularly when used in conjunction with other technologies and tools such as AI, smart tags, and sensors, blockchain has the potential to increase trust and accountability among actors along the supply chain, as well as between businesses and consumers. However, blockchain solutions are far from being suitable for all food supply chains. **What are the legal, technological, environmental and privacy-related challenges of this technology?**

Next generation labelling technologies have the potential to solve issues of information-overload and be more visually appealing and easy to understand. However, such technologies often require access to smartphones and the internet and may exclude the most vulnerable groups in society, who would most benefit from labelling. One solution is to have internet linked in-store scanners, such as those already used for price, which could provide information about food source, carbon footprint, and health benefits. This would also ease the burden on consumers, who may have little desire to download another app but are still keen to learn more about their purchases.

New foods such as plant-based meat, lab-grown meat, and gene-edited food have the potential to be more sustainable alternatives that limit environmentally damaging production processes while still offering nutritional value.

However, with new foods it is difficult to foresee the unintended side-effects, and consumer acceptance tends to be low as these products are often perceived as 'unnatural'. **What information would consumers need for reassurance about 'new foods'?** It is also essential that claims about the nutritional and health value of new foods are substantiated. Given the uncertainty about such products, consumer groups can play a key role in communicating consumer concerns to producers and retailers and providing clear and accurate information which cuts through misconceptions. **How do we communicate information about these foods in a way that consumers can understand?**

New production methods such as precision agriculture and harvest robots utilise new technologies like GPS sensors, big data, and the internet of things to improve the efficiency of crop and livestock farming. In doing so, they can reduce food waste and minimise greenhouse gas emissions. **How do we ensure that the benefits of technology driven farming aren't outweighed by the increased energy requirements? And how do we monitor the full energy footprint is being communicated?**

Technology is changing how we produce, purchase, and consume food, with the potential to improve the health of both consumers and the planet. Yet the importance of food in our individual lives and collective experiences of culture and community make it particularly sensitive to changes. Consumer groups must therefore play a key role in building and maintaining trust, managing concerns over safety or privacy to support the success of new, sustainability-driven food technologies.



KEY QUESTIONS

This backgrounder raises a number of key questions for discussion. We will be exploring answers to these questions through our Change Network and with our membership, as we seek to understand how food systems could be build more sustainably and the steps we need to take to get there.

1. How can consumer organisations influence the development of innovations such as lab-grown meat, blockchain food tracking and AgriTech?
2. How can consumer groups best contribute to creating fairer, safer and more sustainable food systems?
3. Should financial subsidies or penalties be introduced to encourage the purchase of more sustainable food?
4. Should we adjust the policy definition of sustainable diets to include the right to food, as some of our members have proposed?
5. What food issues will we be dealing with in ten years' time?
6. How can the different actors in the food systems work together to ensure technology meets consumers' needs and earns their trust?
7. How can dynamic pricing be fair and help to reduce waste?
8. What data are consumers happy to share and under what terms?
9. What are the legal, technological, environmental and privacy-related challenges of blockchain technology in relation to food systems?
10. What information would consumers need for reassurances about new food types such as lab-grown meat, and gene-edited food? And how do we communicate information about these foods in a way that consumers can understand?
11. How do we ensure that the benefits of technology driven farming aren't outweighed by the increased energy requirements? And how do we monitor the full energy footprint is being communicated?
12. How can we bring consumers and food producers closer together?



CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS AND THE FOOD SYSTEM

Consumer organisations have a long history of contributing to improving food systems. In many ways, the breadth of food issues that the consumer movement works on makes it ideally placed to deliver on the new, broader understanding of sustainability that is embedded in the SDGs. Consumers International and its members have been working for decades to ensure access to safe, healthy, and affordable food.

Whereas the previous sections have explored what consumer organisations are and how they work, the following section explores some of the common food topics consumer organisations work on using the results of our survey and examples drawn from Consumers International's membership. The examples provided are intended to illustrate *how* consumer organisations work on food as much as on *what* they work on.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Food systems contribute to over a third (37%) of global greenhouse gases, as well as playing a significant part in deforestation, energy consumption, increased plastics use and waste, and declining water tables. Farming and agriculture have played a part in a significant loss of soil biodiversity and genetic diversity in crop and livestock species. Of the 6,000 plant species cultivated for food, only nine account for 66 percent of total crop production.¹⁹

Only by looking at the environmental impact of the whole food system, can we hope to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Our members recognise this and don't just work directly with consumers but engage producers, farmers and governments to make the changes needed for more environmentally conscious food systems.

Consumers Association of Penang (CAP), Malaysia

CAP is committed to tackling decreasing levels of biodiversity by promoting seed saving and sharing among farmers, gardeners and the public. They are aiming to reintroduce traditional hardy varieties of seeds, minor crops, local species of vegetables and rare herbs. CAP hosted a seed sharing fair for gardeners and farmers in 2018, with an online seed sharing network established afterwards.

The Rwanda Consumer's Rights Protection Organization (ADECOR)

ADECOR is addressing the problem of inefficient use of land for agriculture and damaging livestock practices caused by the 'one cow per family' programme. ADECOR will be encouraging Rwandans to move away from such individualised form of ownership and adopt a culture of sharing within communities instead. Participants will be encouraged to use collective cowsheds and greenhouses, rather than each family having their own. ADECOR are aiming to build the communities' capacity to take collective decisions, while also encouraging a more sustainable and efficient use of land.

IDEC, Brazil

Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor (IDEC) conducted consumer surveys between 2010 and 2012 that showed that consumers would be more interested in organic food if it were cheaper. Over the next five years, IDEC conducted price surveillance and launched a website and app that maps where consumers can buy cheaper organic food. At the same time, taking advantage of the Brazilian national schools feeding programme which stipulates that 30% of food purchases must come from small farmers, some city schools were also already buying organic food. IDEC used its position as a member of the national school committee to promote further consumption of organic food in schools. This work was combined with a national petition calling for a reduction in the use of agrochemicals.

CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS AND THE FOOD SYSTEM CONTINUED

PESTICIDES

Consumers International has a long history of working on the issue of pesticides, having been involved in the genesis of the Pesticide Action Network. Today, Consumers International manages the Green Action Week fund, created by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, which has supported a number of our members to work on pesticides. From 2013 to 2017, the theme of the week was 'Safer, more Sustainable Food', with a focus on promoting foods produced more sustainably, with lower levels of pesticides.

Examples from individual consumer organisations

CERC, India

In India, the Consumer Education and Research Centre (CERC) tested both organic and non-organic brands of rice for the presence of pesticides and heavy metals, and used the findings of this study to pressure the regulatory authorities to establish higher standards on the advertising and labelling of organic food. In 2016 and 2017, CERC ran an awareness-raising public campaign and workshops about organic farming amongst participating students, university staff and local women. CERC also targeted voluntary consumer organisations, who play a key role in their communities' understanding of consumer issues. Alongside this, they involved school consumer clubs in the project, and encouraged the students to advocate for sustainable lifestyles in their respective communities.

SEWA, Nepal

In parts of Nepal, the use of hazardous pesticides is resulting in health problems and environmental destruction, including the eradication of wildlife essential to the farming ecosystem. Socio Economic Welfare Action for Women and Children (SEWA) ran a campaign in 2016 to raise awareness of the negative impact of pesticide use and provided vocational training to farmers on equally effective natural alternatives. In 2017, over 250 people took part in training sessions, which covered a range of topics including the use of organic fertiliser, bio-fertiliser, bio-pesticide and vermicomposting.



CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS AND THE FOOD SYSTEM CONTINUED

FOOD WASTE

One third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year – approximately 1.3 billion tonnes – gets lost or wasted.²¹ Consumer organisations naturally tend to focus more on consumer food waste than producer food waste. Activities range from articles to raise consumer awareness on the magnitude of the problem and what consumers can do to address it, to developing smartphone apps to help consumers re-use left-overs, and surveying consumers to better understand the reasons behind household food waste.

Examples from individual consumer organisations

Malaysian Water Forum

The Malaysian Water Forum (an affiliate member of FOMCA, the national umbrella body of consumer associations in Malaysia) runs the Feed People Not Landfill project, aimed at changing consumer behaviour, reducing food waste generation and improving source separation and composting of food waste to minimise food waste ending up in largely unsanitary landfills. Activities include awareness programs with community and food service operators on food waste issues. The program led to a 55% reduction in carbon emissions that were initially generated by community participants (data calculated from sampling) and a reduction of almost 40% in carbon emissions that were initially generated from food service operators. The project also included an awareness and leadership program with schools. A selected group of students lead multiple programs and activities to improve reduction and management of food waste at school. The program resulted in a reduction of 65% in carbon emissions.

OCU, Spain

From March 2016 to January 2018, Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios (OCU) ran a consumer education campaign on food waste and seasonal eating that reached 19,600 people. OCU produced promotional material including leaflets, games, recipe suggestions for re-using leftover and calendars showing when to buy seasonal fruit, vegetables and fish.



21 FAO, SAVE FOOD: Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction, www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/

CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS AND THE FOOD SYSTEM CONTINUED

NUTRITION

Consumer organisations have a role to play in combatting malnutrition in all of its forms. In relation to obesity and diet-related ill health, many of the issues, and policy levers identified by the consumer movement, are captured in Consumers International's 2014 publication, [Recommendations towards a Global Convention to Protect and Promote Healthy Diets](#). This lays out many of the measures being taken around the world to help consumers make healthier choices.

These include: defining what constitutes a healthy diet through food-based dietary guidelines and nutrient profiling models; education, skills, communication and public awareness; provision of nutrition information; responsible food and beverage advertising, promotion and sponsorship; placing controls on advertising, promotion and sponsorship to children; improved nutritional quality of foods and reduced levels of potentially harmful nutrients; economic, planning and licensing measures, including fiscal incentives. Consumers International and its members have been involved in promoting many of these measures, nationally and internationally.

World Consumer Rights Day 2015 called on the World Health Organization (WHO) to agree an International Convention to Protect and Promote Healthy Diets. [National activities to mark the day were held by 110 Consumers International members in 84 countries.](#)

Consumers International's members, particularly in lower-income countries are also involved in working to combat malnutrition in the form of hunger and undernourishment. Levers to address hunger that consumer organisations are typically involved in include food prices. Some members have also been involved in work to promote nutrition and food fortification. For example, the Brazilian Institute of Consumer Defence (IDEC) has created a '10 Steps for a Healthy Living' booklet, promoting local, fresh, diversified, non-processed and healthy food options. Additionally, our Senegalese member, Association pour la Défense de l'Environnement et des Consommateurs (ADEC) is working in partnership with the Committee for the Fortification of Micronutrient Foods (COSFAM), carrying out consumer education and outreach sessions. In Russia, our member KONFOP is working with government stakeholders to promote the mandatory iodine fortification of flour and bread, and mandatory supply of fortified salt to retail shops.

Examples from individual consumer organisations

ASPEC, Peru

ASPEC has launched the Nutri App, a tool that helps consumers understand nutritional labelling. In parallel, it has been monitoring the application of labelling regulation and has worked with the Consumer Protection Commission to ensure food and drinks don't go over the recommended sugar portions and daily consumption figures.

El Poder del Consumidor, Mexico

Acting on data that showed that 70% of sugar in the Mexican diet comes from sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs), El Poder del Consumidor worked with an alliance of NGOs and academics to campaign for a two peso per litre (20%) federal excise tax on SSBs and for the tax revenue to be earmarked for obesity and chronic disease prevention, starting with the installation of water fountains in Mexican schools. The alliance ran a high-profile mass media campaign on subways, buses, billboards, paid TV, radio, magazines and social media; involving striking images and strong messages. The alliance also lobbied legislators. In 2014, Mexico introduced a specific excise tax of 1 peso (0.07 USD) per litre. In its 2015 budget, congress also assigned a first allocation of the tax to drinking water fountains in schools.

CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS AND THE FOOD SYSTEM CONTINUED

Consumer Council of Fiji

The Consumer Council of Fiji (CCF) has lobbied for, and achieved in 2016, increased taxation on sugar sweetened beverages. Additionally, it pushed for the standardisation of food nutrition labelling in order to make it more consistent with dietary recommendations. CCF worked with other agencies to establish the National Alliance for Healthy Living and conducted a workshop on addressing a major cultural habit, the consumption of salty or sugary foods, drinks, snacks and tobacco during kava drinking sessions. The organisation has also pushed for the introduction of a restaurant grading system.

Consumer Council of Zimbabwe

The Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) played an important role in the development and dissemination of food-based dietary guidelines (FBDG). In October 2017, CCZ participated in a three-day workshop facilitated by the Ministry of Health and Child Care, the Ministry of Agriculture Mechanisation and Irrigation Development, and the FAO. The technical team had members from various government ministries and departments, as well as UNICEF, Save the Children, WFP and academia. The process to develop the FBDGs took into account food availability, diet patterns and nutrition-related health issues. These guidelines are expected to form the basis for public food and nutrition, health and agricultural policies and nutrition education programmes to foster healthy eating habits and lifestyles. FAO and the Ministry of Health and Child Care will travel the country to train CCZ club members on FBDGs so they can work as Village Health Workers, disseminating the necessary information.

vzbv, Germany

vzbv is participating in reworking the German government's national food strategy, starting in 2018. Major producers are also participating in the strategy and co-signed a declaration with the government on the need to reduce levels of salt and sugar in processed foods. Industry will release self-set targets, with a view to meeting them by 2025. vzbv's role in the strategy process is to call for ambitious targets, both through roundtable discussions and direct conversations with companies. Depending on the ambition of the targets, vzbv could help communicate the need for change to consumers. vzbv will also check on the progress towards the targets after they are set, effectively monitoring the overseeing that will be put in place by the government.



CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS AND THE FOOD SYSTEM

CONTINUED

FOOD SAFETY

An important aspect of food safety is ensuring that countries have the right laws in place to protect basic food safety, and, perhaps even more importantly, that these laws are enforced effectively. According to the WHO, one in 10 people fall ill every year from eating contaminated food and 420,000 die as a result.¹⁹

A typical way that consumer organisations can work together on an issue is through the development of guidelines or toolkits that are then used by members nationally. An international example of this is [Safe Food International's Guidelines to Promote National Food Safety Systems](#), an initiative with partners including the FAO and a number of Consumers International members, which was launched ten years ago. Although in need of updating, it gives a useful picture of what is required for national food safety from the perspective of the consumer movement. The guidelines identify eight essential elements for an effective national food safety program: Food Laws and Regulations; Foodborne Disease Surveillance and Investigation Systems; Food Control Management; Inspection Services; Recall and Tracking Systems; Food Monitoring Laboratories; Information, Education, Communication, and Training; Funding and Affordability of the National Food Safety Program. Consumer organisations work in most, if not all, of these areas.

Consumer organisations also use the testing of food products for contaminants or fraud to hold governments to account on food safety. Some organisations even have their own dedicated labs. Other tools include campaigning and lobbying for governments to adopt and enforce food safety standards; inspecting food facilities and working to educate food handlers and consumers themselves.

Examples from individual consumer organisations

Which? UK

Following the horsemeat scandal in 2013, Which? conducted consumer engagement exercises around the UK to understand consumer attitudes towards the breadth of challenges facing the food system – from climate change to obesity. Which? held a national 'Future of Food Debate' to better understand how people viewed the many competing pressures impacting the food chain – and what they thought the priorities should be. The debate included four two-day, in-depth citizens' juries. These were backed up by a survey, representative of the UK population, and a travelling video booth. In conducting the engagement exercises, Which? partnered with the Government Office for Science. The feedback was that participants wanted an independent consumer champion to determine the best way forward to address sustainability issues and take into account consumer priorities and monitor the long-term effects of food system changes. The report, published in 2013, considered possible solutions – behaviour change, promoting existing best practices and innovation - and highlighted the importance of independent oversight and of a joined-up food policy.

Yemen Association of Consumer Protection

The Yemen Association for Consumer Protection (YACP) has recently demonstrated that, even in the context of war, there is always a role for consumer protection. Building on years of experience training students and workers in the agriculture, health, food and social care sectors, as well as advocating for better consumer protection laws, YACP continues to work through the current blockade. In the last three years, YACP has run projects to raise awareness about pesticide use and to improve consumers' access to clean and healthy water. In February 2018, it organised a seminar on Bird Flu, consumer protection and the national economy under the wartime blockade. YACP is seeking funding to establish a series of awareness-raising lectures for women's associations and committees on safe food and rationalisation of consumption during the war, as well as on the evaluation of the quality of food provided by organisations and donor countries.

19 WHO, Who Estimates Of The Global Burden Of Foodborne Diseases, http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/199350/9789241565165_eng.pdf?sequence=1

CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS AND THE FOOD SYSTEM CONTINUED

FOOD INFORMATION

Food information covers all information available to a consumer when making a purchase decision. This includes information displayed on the packaging or on labels, at point of sale in shops and on menus or online. It may relate to the product's origins, ingredients, nutrient content, method or terms of production.

Nutrition labelling on food packaging has been a major focus for consumer groups in recent years. The development of a growing number of voluntary and mandatory 'front-of-pack' (FOP) nutrition labelling schemes as a response to the growing problem of obesity and other diet-related ill health has drawn the involvement of Consumers International members around the world.

Consumers International is also working with members to contribute to the Codex Committee on Food Labelling electronic working group (EWG), which has been set up to draft guidance on FOP labelling.

Other types of food labelling that consumer organisations work on include country of origin labelling; GM labelling; and labels that relate to the method or terms of production. Codex Alimentarius agreed guidance for labelling of GM foods in July 2011. Consumers International had pushed for and actively participated in the development of the guidance for twenty years, in order to allow countries wishing to adopt GM food labelling to do so without fear of facing legal challenge from the World Trade Organization.

When it comes to labelling schemes for foods produced to fairtrade or organic standards, the role of consumer organisations is to ensure the ethical or nutritional claims about the food products can be substantiated.

Since 2014, Consumers International has co-lead the Consumer Information for Sustainable Consumption & Production (CI-SCP) Programme, one of six programmes under the One Planet Network. The other co-leads are the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, and the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry. The CI-SCP Programme aims to support the provision of quality information on goods and services to enable consumers to make choices and promote more sustainable consumption and production.

Examples from individual consumer organisations

Consumer Reports, USA

In the USA, Consumer Reports (CR) has worked extensively on genetically modified (GMO) food labelling and antibiotic labelling. Consumer Reports campaigned strongly for labelling to alert consumers to the presence of GMO. Following concerted efforts, the case for labelling was won, first in the state of Vermont in 2014 and then nationwide. In the last four years, Consumer Reports has also conducted surveys of antibiotic labelling on meat products in the USA, exposing inconsistencies between types of labelling and examples of misleading wording. For instance, labelling declaring food was 'antibiotic free,' did not mean that antibiotics had not been used in production.

Consumer Reports have also called for clear labelling to distinguish lab-grown meat from conventional meat and called for pre-market safety testing.

Consumentenbond, Netherlands

In 2016, Consumers International's Dutch member campaigned successfully against the (Healthy) Choices logo, as a means of informing consumers about healthier products within specific food categories. The logo has been used in the Netherlands for years by many producers and retailers, despite criticism from health and consumer organisations. In 2016, Consumentenbond's research showed that consumers didn't understand this kind of information and that the logo was misleading. Consumentenbond filed an successful official complaint to the Ministry of Health, who in 2017 ordered the logo be phased out.

In 2018, Consumentenbond conducted new research that showed very strong support for front-of-pack schemes. Consumentenbond sent the report and a position paper to members of the Dutch parliament and the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport. It was positively received by many members of parliament. The Dutch State Secretary recently announced he will commission new research on the possible introduction of a new front-of-pack scheme.

El Poder del Consumidor, Mexico

Our member in Mexico has created an "Nutritional Scanner" app to help consumers understand the Mexican label, which, consumers can find unclear. The app will indicate the sugar, saturated fats, sodium and calories contained in a range of widely available food products.

IDEC, Brazil

Consumers International's Brazilian member Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor (IDEC) published research on front-of-pack labelling in Brazil in 2016. The research showed that 40% of respondents have difficulties understanding the existing 'nutrition facts' table. 93% said that front-of-pack labelling would help them understand healthier options. IDEC then collaborated with the Federal University of Paraná to develop a proposal for a warning label, similar to the one used in Chile.



CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS AND THE FOOD SYSTEM CONTINUED



FOOD MARKETING

Food marketing, particularly that which targets children, has been a big issue for the consumer movement, and for Consumers International, for more than two decades, dating back to our first international survey of food marketing practices in 1996. Now indisputably linked to rising childhood obesity, the marketing to children of energy dense foods, or drinks that are high in unhealthy fat, salt and sugar has been subject to controls in many countries around the world. Consumer organisations have been key in identifying and monitoring all of the various channels through which children are targeted including: broadcast; print; outdoor; sponsorship; online through websites, apps and games; on packaging and in stores via lay outs and promotions.

Food marketing was the theme for World Consumer Rights Day in 2008 and 2009, where members took part in coordinated campaign stunts including a 'lunchbox challenge', addressing what children eat for lunch. Campaigning by Consumers International and its members was also central to the agreement, in 2010, of a [set of WHO recommendations](#) on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children at the World Health Assembly. After the recommendations were published Consumers International produced a campaigning toolkit for members and a guide for members and governments on how to monitor different marketing channels to identify examples of unhealthy marketing targeting children.

Besides unhealthy food marketing that targets children, consumer organisations are concerned with any food marketing that makes spurious or misleading claims regarding the health, nutritional value or other qualities of food.

Examples from individual consumer organisations

Consumentenbond, Netherlands

In 2016 Consumentenbond launched an online '[Wall of Shame](#),' gallery showcasing examples of products that are misleadingly marketed as healthy. Pictures of the products are displayed with an explanation of why they are were selected.

FOOD ADDITIVES

Another area of concern for consumer organisations working on food is food additives, including additives used in food packaging. When new types of additives are developed and safety questions remain unanswered by existing evidence (such as with nanoparticles, or BPA), or where new evidence emerges concerning existing additives, consumer organisations will defend consumer safety ahead of other interests.

Examples from individual consumer organisations

UFC Que Choisir, France

In January 2018, Que Choisir (UFC) announced it would file complaints against four food manufacturers over failure to comply with the EU nano labelling requirement. Testing by the French consumer organisation had revealed the presence of nano particles that were not indicated on the packaging, as is required by law in France.

Danish Consumer Council

In 2015, The Danish Consumer Council set up the THINK chemicals initiative, for consumers seeking to avoid chemicals. The initiative regularly tests products and product packaging and publishes the results. For example, in May 2018, THINK published the results of a test of ready-baked cakes that showed that unwanted fluorinated substances are still used in the paper in which the cakes are baked and packaged, despite the recommendations of the Danish authorities.



CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS AND THE FOOD SYSTEM CONTINUED



ANTIBIOTICS IN FARMING

Consumer organisations began working on the issue of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) following testing that revealed the presence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria on meat and poultry samples sold by retailers²². The misuse and overuse of antibiotics in farming was the obvious aspect of the AMR crisis for the consumer movement to work on, since antibiotic consumption in animal health is higher than consumption for human health, and since the use of antibiotics for food animals can directly impact consumers.

Consumers International has been an active member of the Codex Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (TFAMR) in both its 2007-11 inception and in the work it started in 2017. The TFAMR is developing science-based guidance on the management of foodborne antimicrobial resistance, in order to ensure that members can manage antimicrobial resistance along the food chain. To create this guidance they draw from the WHO Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, the work and standards of relevant international organisations, such as the FAO, the WHO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the One-Health approach.

In 2016, the use of antibiotics in farming was the theme for World Consumer Rights Day. 75 Consumers International members in 60 countries ran national campaigns. Consumers International and its members also ran a joint campaign calling on multinational restaurant chains, including McDonald's, KFC and Subway, to make global, time-bound commitments to stop serving meat from animals routinely given antibiotics included on the WHO's list of important antimicrobials. The campaign saw success when, in 2017, McDonald's announced that antibiotics classed by the WHO as Highest Priority Critically Important (HPCIA) to human medicine will be banned from use in chicken destined for restaurants in the USA, Canada, Brazil, Japan, and South Korea by the end of 2018. By the end of 2019, HPCIA will be eliminated from chicken for Australia, Russia and Europe. By January 2027, HPCIA will be prohibited in the production of chicken in all other McDonald's markets around the world.

Examples from individual consumer organisations

Consumentenbond, Netherlands

Consumentenbond were among the first consumer organisations to test for ESBL-forming bacteria, which indicates antibiotic resistance. In 2012, 140 samples of regular chicken and 100 samples of organic grown chicken were tested. The results showed that 99% of the regular chicken were contaminated and that 97% of the samples of the organic chicken were also contaminated, though with a lower level of contamination per sample. The research garnered attention for the issue and Consumentenbond were able to use the opportunity to put pressure on the government to improve its targets and on industry to rectify bad practices.

Consumer Reports, USA

Consumer Reports (CR) has worked very extensively on the issue of antibiotics in farming and has led two major campaigns in the USA aimed at retailers and at fast food outlets. In the latter, CR worked in coalition with health, environmental and consumer advocates. Activities included consumer education, food products testing, and label surveys (see food information section). CR has collaborated for a number of years with Consumers International affiliate member Food Animal Concerns Trust, along with several others, to produce an annual survey of restaurant policies. Public pressure is matched with direct lobbying of the companies targeted.

22 The Guardian, 15 Jan 2018, [British supermarket chickens show record levels of antibiotic-resistant superbugs](#)
Consumer Reports, 4 to 7 March 2003, [Presence Of Antimicrobial-Resistant Pathogens In Retail Poultry Products](#)

CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS AND THE FOOD SYSTEM CONTINUED



FOOD PRICES

Many consumer organisations monitor food prices, tracking the cost of regular shopping baskets. Consumer organisations also campaign for transparency around food prices, particularly from retailers. For example, standardised unit pricing can make costs clearer for consumers (see below member example for more).

Examples from individual consumer organisations

Consumer Council of Zimbabwe

The Consumer Council of Zimbabwe carries out regular price surveys, which enables it to monitor price trends of commodities. From these findings, a basket of food for a family of six, for a low income urban earner is produced. The family of six budget is used by many employees, by workers' councils for wage negotiations and by individuals to calculate their monthly shopping budgets.

Centre for Consumer Defence, El Salvador

In collaboration with the Kenoli Foundation, in 2019, the Centre for Consumer Defence (CDC) published a 'Comparative Analysis of Central American Food Baskets'. The study compared the basic food baskets (CBA) of the countries of Central America (El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua). It looked at their caloric composition, food products, their value, and linked the information to the national minimum wage, the Consumer Price Index and poverty rates. This build understanding of the differences and similarities in the region, as well as evaluating the effect and impact CBA's have on the population of each country.

CASE, Singapore

In 2019, CASE Singapore, launched a mobile app, Price Kaki, to allow consumers to compare in-store retail prices and promotions of common household items, groceries, and hawker food all through a single platform. The word "kaki" in Price Kaki loosely refers to friends and embodies the concept of a network of friends sharing shopping suggestions with one another. Users can contribute retail prices and promotions whenever they come across a good deal. Beside user-contributed data, retail prices and promotions are also kept up to date by the major local supermarkets that are part of the initiative. Through Price Kaki, consumers are able to browse the items they are searching for and filter according to price and proximity before visiting a shop.



CONCLUSION



Consumers International's members are independent civil society organisations working to protect and promote consumer rights. Many include the goal of safe, affordable, healthy and sustainable food for all as part of this mission. Decades of experience as advocates for consumers make consumer organisations well placed to bolster demand for sustainable diets at the same time as working to promote more sustainable production and to improve government and company policies.

Consumer organisation have an important role to understand and drive forward future trends and technologies that are of benefit to consumers. Their extensive experience in food systems has given them strong transferable skills.

They provide a unique and important perspective. They are often experienced and valued actors in a national context. They are well connected and well respected, with expertise in research, testing, education, awareness raising, convening groups and campaigns and advocacy.

Consumer groups are evolving to meet the challenges of the future - how will we feed the 9.7 billion people who will be living on earth by 2050? How do we reduce the environmental impact of food systems? How do we maintain the planet's biodiversity, and at the same time giving people choice over the food they want to eat? And how will technology play a role in this?



Consumers International works internationally as a respected umbrella organisation working on shared issues and able to respond to an increasingly globalised food system. It has experience co-ordinating and supporting the national activities of its members, along with representing them at Codex, at the WHO, the FAO, and the UN; as well as producing guidelines and toolkits, and administering funds for

Photo taken from Green Action Week 2016



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