

# Some Thoughts for ICN 2013

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# The Timing / the Opportunity

- The world's economy is in a delicate state:
  - Growth in developing world
  - Stagnation and uncertainty in the developed world
- The nutrition transition is creating problems
  - Developing countries now knows this
  - Despite strong evidence, the policy response is weak
- This is an opportunity:
  - The western leaders are on the defensive about macro-economics
  - The western model of food progress is also in stress
- It is also a threat... there are tensions:
  - The dominant thinking wants to return to business-as-usual
- ICN must therefore be about shifting the balance in favour of food change

# Where are we now?

(a) The good news

(b) The bad news

# The C20<sup>th</sup> food system's success story

- More food
- Cheaper food
- More people fed
- 'Efficient' agriculture
- Technical improvements eg logistics
- Evidence that better food improves health
- Advances in nutrition science

# The problem

- ‘Productionism’ has created high impact diets:
  - Environment: CO<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>O, eco-systems
  - Health: NCDs, safety, antimicrobials, zoonoses
  - Society: inequalities, social determinants
  - Culture: ubiquity of ultra-processed foods,
  - Economy: de-ruralisation, jobs, profits go to processors/traders
- Nutrition science lacks leverage:
  - is largely silent about the environment
  - is weak on culture (now leaves it to behavioural sciences)

**What is the state of policy on this?**

Not very good!

# A summary of where we are

- Wide gap between evidence, policy and behaviour
- Lack of real high level political interest
- Domination of the 'under-production/under-consumption' policy focus
- Lock-in to consumer choice culture
- Warped taste culture, not helped by marketing \$€£

BUT....

- Strong evidence business model must change
- Some companies are changing but at single product level and to protect brand value

# **What can we do about this?**

Poor record so far of big change.

Is it time to get tougher?



# Nutrition Science's role in all this

- Nutrition is marginal in policy
  - Seen as 'worthy' but not important
  - Offering some technical thoughts
- This isn't helped by Nutrition science offering split policy solutions:
  - Life sciences → personalised medicine/food/diets
  - Social → societal change (redistribution)
  - Eco-nutrition → live simply (one planet diet)

# yet Nutrition can contribute to a better vision of Progress

- Better quality of lives
- Reduced healthcare costs (which are rising)
- Reduced environmental impact (CO<sub>2</sub>= energy)
- A coherent role for food in public policy, beyond commenting on quantity and price
- Part of an interdisciplinary perspective
- Ecological public health framework

# Task ahead: to aid 'big picture' coherence

- What is a good diet and a good food system?
  - There have been attempts to tackle this (Sweden, UK, NL, Australia) but they have lost traction
  - They appealed to morality – choice not 'choice-editing'
  - BUT EU and China are evolving resource-efficiency model
- The big picture problems need to be grasped:
  1. Eg Do we eat fish or meat? Yes or no?  
Or is it a matter of 'sustainable sourcing'; how much, how fed?
  2. What would food system be if eco-human health?

# **Sustainable dietary guidelines: why this matters**

They are needed

They make a difference

They re-engage with consumer complexity

They help set a framework for the food system

# The case for SustDiet Guidelines

- Current Food-Based Dietary Guidelines are ‘environment-blind’
- Efforts to address this problem have opened the territory but not resolved the problems
- ICN 2013 is the time to do this:
  - Past efforts could be built on, supported, clarified:
    - Sust Diet or Food-Based Sust Diet?
    - Eat fish? Yes or no?
    - Meat & dairy? How much? How produced?
    - Focus on horticulture rather than agriculture?

# ICN 2013 is the right time/place to:

- Revise the global vision for food policy
- Reconnect nutrition with other disciplines
- Offer solutions to the problem of agriculture
- Face real consumer, commercial and cultural problems
- Champion a perspective that addresses consumer choice: what's a good diet?

# Issues to debate

Strategic and tactical issues

# Process options for Sust Diets

- Public policy
  - WHO, FAO, UNEP do a joint high level report
  - Intergovernmental Panel on Sustainable Diets (like IPCC?)
  - A consortium of governments (eg N EU consortium)
  - A consortium of agencies
- Professions-led:
  - Interdisciplinary Working Group: Science & social science
- Commerce /corporations:
  - Corporate Responsibility (eg Barilla Centre)
  - Labelling (eg carbon labels)
- Civil Society:
  - Consumer culture campaigns (eg WWF One Planet Diet)



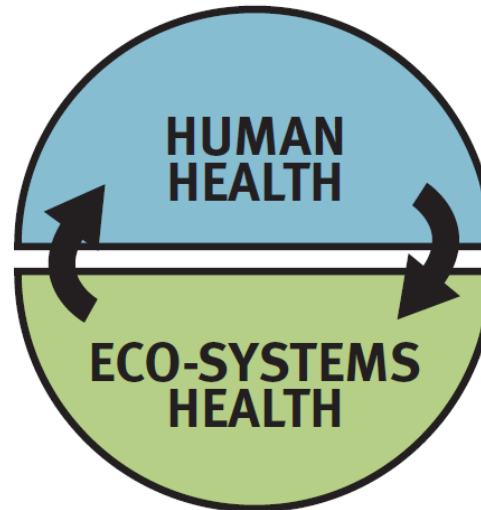
**To summarise**

**Why I think ICN should focus on the  
problem of Sustainable Diets**

# Sustainable Dietary Guidelines:

- Change the general policy framework
- Resolve the split in public health nutrition(s):
  - Life sciences / Social / Environmental
- Bridge the gap between NCD and CO2e discourses
- Re-set moral/political drivers for food systems
- Help shape institutional reform: inter-ministerial coherence to meet consumer needs
- Provide new basis for public advice and supply chain goals

## 1. The Dynamics of Ecological Public Health: A simple model



Source: Lang & Rayner (2012) Ecological Public Health: the 21<sup>st</sup> century big idea?, *British Medical Journal*, 2012;345:e546 <http://www.bmj.com/content/345/bmj.e5466>

**We have much to do!**

**Thank you!**

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# Appendix

Some supplementary data

# Arguments against Sust Diets (some good, some not so good)

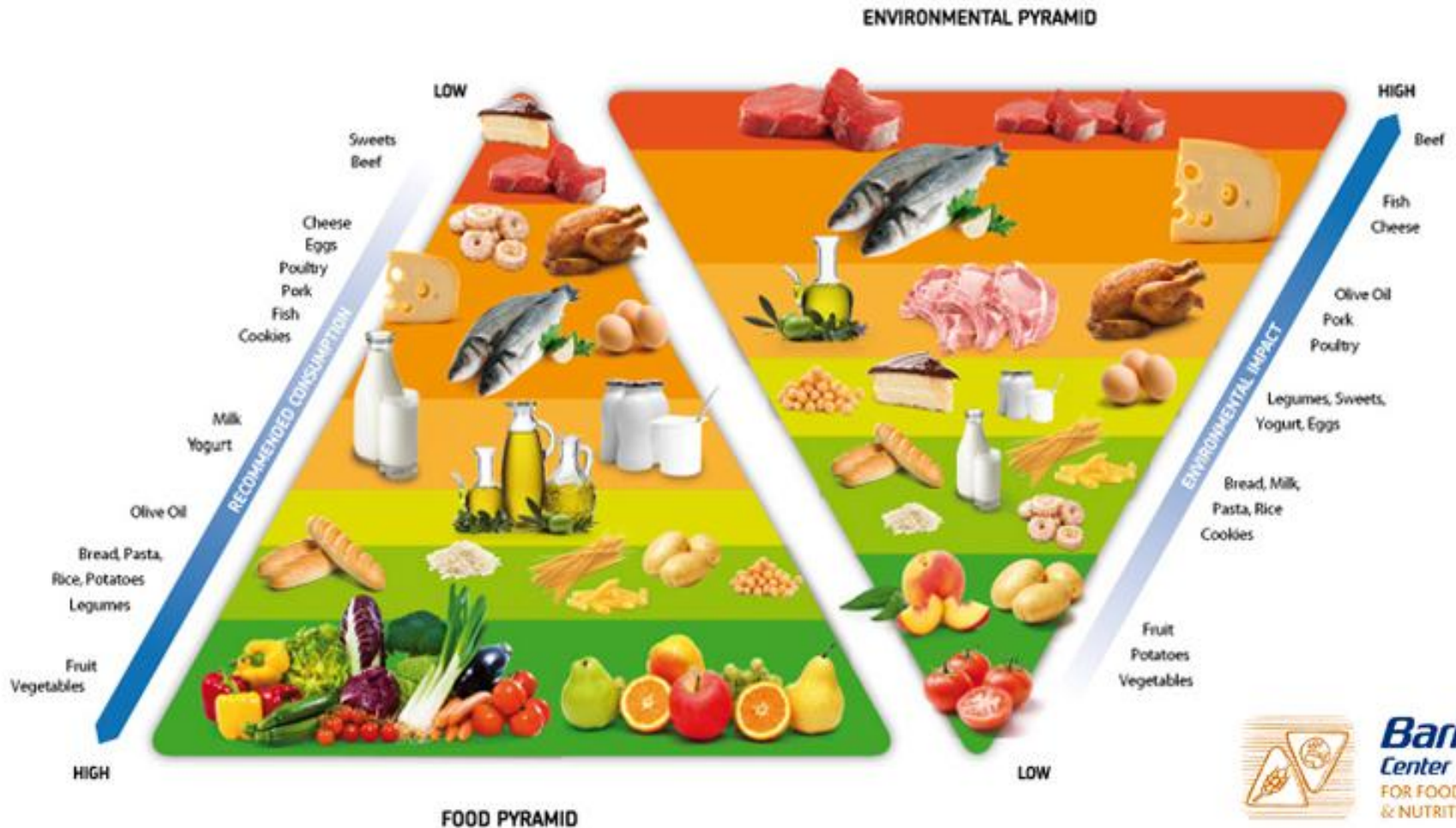
- Environment (CO<sub>2</sub>e) is not nutrition's problem
- SDs are Trojan horse for anti-meat & dairy lobby
- Too complicated (let markets/prices sort this)
- Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) are OK
  - hard fought for and recognised tool in policy-making
  - backed by WHO and FAO (bridge between them)
  - symbolise scientific knowledge's triumph over 'unscientific' cultural knowledge
- Human physiology and nutrition needs are the same everywhere. SD thinking muddles this.
- But these are not reasons to avoid the shift to Sust Diets

**Definitions of SDs are emerging:**  
**eg FAO & Bioversity International,**  
International Scientific Symposium, Final Doc, 3-5 Nov 2010  
<http://www.fao.org/ag/humannutrition/23781-0e8d8dc364ee46865d5841c48976e9980.pdf>

*Sustainable Diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. 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’.*

# Eg Barilla Centre: combining nutrition with environment gains

<http://www.barillacfn.com/en/bcfn4you/la-doppia-piramide/>





# Eg on Sustainable food consumption and production – emerging Govt policy advice in Europe (North)

UK 2006	Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) & National Consumer Council	Sustainable Consumption “/ will if you will” – generic
Germany 2008 -	German Council for Sustainable Development	Sustainable Shopping Basket : includes food – lists labels and schemes
EU 2008	Sustainable Consumption-Production & Sustainable Industrial Policy Action Plan	Voluntary initiatives – but little food focus
Netherlands 2009	LNV Ministry – Policy outline for achieving Sustainable Food	Sustainable food production & consumer educ. campaigns
Sweden 2009	National Food Administration (& Swedish EPA) – notification to EU (withdrawn 2011)	Environmentally friendly food choices
UK 2009	SDC, Council of Food Policy Advisors → Dept Environment Food Rural Affairs (Defra)	Recommend defining low impact (sustainable) healthy diet
Netherlands 2011	Health Council for Ministry Economic Affairs, Agriculture & Innovation	Guidelines Healthy Diet: Ecological Perspective

# Eg UK Sustainable Development Commission 2011 report proposed sustainability as a complex set of 'poly-values'

<http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=1187>

<p><b>Quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taste</li> <li>• Seasonality</li> <li>• Cosmetic</li> <li>• Fresh (where appropriate)</li> <li>• Authenticity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasure</li> <li>• Identity</li> <li>• Animal welfare</li> <li>• Equality &amp; justice</li> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Choice</li> <li>• Skills (citizenship)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change</li> <li>• Energy use</li> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Land use</li> <li>• Soil</li> <li>• Biodiversity</li> <li>• Waste reduction</li> </ul>	<p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Nutrition</li> <li>• Equal access</li> <li>• Availability</li> <li>• Social status/ affordability</li> <li>• Information &amp; education</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food security &amp; resilience</li> <li>• Affordability (price)</li> <li>• Efficiency</li> <li>• True competition &amp; fair returns</li> <li>• Jobs &amp; decent working conditions</li> <li>• Fully internalised costs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science &amp; technology evidence base</li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Democratic accountability</li> <li>• Ethical values (fairness)</li> <li>• International aid &amp; development</li> </ul>