

Priorities for understanding what is a healthy and sustainable diet



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Outline

- Introduction
- Research issues
 - impact of environment on food
 - Impact of food on environment
- Priorities for moving forward
- Food guide application suggestion
- Concluding comments (where to from here?)



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The relationship between environmental sustainability and nutrition



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Source: Leunig, *The Age* 22/2/08



impact of environment on food

- **Multidisciplinary team (cross institutions)**
- **CSIRO Stocks and Flows method**
- **Potential impacts of climate change on fruit and vegetable production in Australia: implications for food security**
 - The risk of food insecurity was assessed as low to medium for 2030. The risk for 2070 was assessed as medium for a best case (low emissions scenario) and high to extreme for a worst case (high emissions) scenario.



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Impact of food/diet on environment

- **Multidisciplinary team (cross institutions)**
- **Diet norms**
- **Recommended dietary patterns**

The conceptual and values challenges

- Sustainability is a value-laden term, we need to be clear about its meaning within value systems
- Should it account for equity considerations? Should it account for economic implications, eg potential loss of jobs?



Ethical challenges

- Utilitarianism versus human rights versus being stewards for future generations
- Does concern for human health extend to animals and plants?



Process challenges

- Who is supposed to be doing what to arrive at recommendations for a sustainable diet (and how will they do it)?



Technical challenges

- Synthesising and collating the evidence
- The complexity of the inter-connections, likelihood of anomalies, etc



Translating the evidence challenges

- How weigh up environmental, health and social benefits?
- Can we develop metrics that integrate health, social and environmental considerations?



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Preparing recommendations challenges

- Aspirational versus pragmatic?
- Prescriptive versus general principles?



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The policy challenges

- Uncertainties in the evidence base to inform policy
 - What is nature of relationships (adaptation vs positive feedback)?
 - Which interventions are effective?
- Competing policy agendas
- Population growth, demographic and behaviour changes
- International context
- Perverse policy agendas
- Garnering political will
- ~~Rate of policy response~~
 - Avoiding the soft (and largely ineffective) options



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Competing policy agendas



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McColl K. Can we feed the world? 2008; BMJ,336;1336-1338

Analytical framework

		Level of governance				
		Local Government	State Government	National Government	International	Corporate / Non-government
Sector	Primary production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land-use management (zoning) Community gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agricultural subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agricultural subsidies Taxes on primary production Research and development in agriculture Fair trading arrangements for small suppliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wealthy countries (e.g. USA, EU) agriculture subsidies 	
	Food processing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food composition standards Food composition monitoring 		
	Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmers markets Access to water in public places Availability of fresh foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food transport Access of fresh foods in remote areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Import tariffs Import restrictions / restrictions on supply Quarantine laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trade arrangements between countries 	
	Marketing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing to children Marketing practices in schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing to children Nutrient content disclosures in marketing material Consumer protection (e.g. from misleading advertising) Package sizes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing to children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing to children
	Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land-use management (zoning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Products sold in schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutrition labelling Health claims on food products Incentive system for welfare Taxes on unhealthy food Subsidies on healthy food 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product placement in stores
	Catering / Food service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of fast food outlets Standards for food served Food procurement policies Food handling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutrition information in restaurants Standards for food served Food procurement policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards for food served in public institutions Food procurement policies 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School food policies Standards for food served in Food procurement policies



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[Sacks, Swinburn, Lawrence, 2008, ANZ Health Policy]



The framework provides a strategic tool to help organise and prioritise the planning, implementation and evaluation of policy interventions

- Move beyond just the health ministry (the 'field of operation' is cross sectoral)
- 'Joined-up' policies across different levels of governance (policy convergence)
- Forge new partnerships across the food system
- Need to be multi-faceted

[Cabinet Office, "Food Matters: Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century", 2008]



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Work within existing policy and regulatory systems

Develop nutrition reference standards (food guides and dietary guidelines) that integrate environmental and social dimensions

Incorporate environmental and social impact assessments into our decision-making for policies (broaden scope of risk analysis)



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Nutrition reference standards

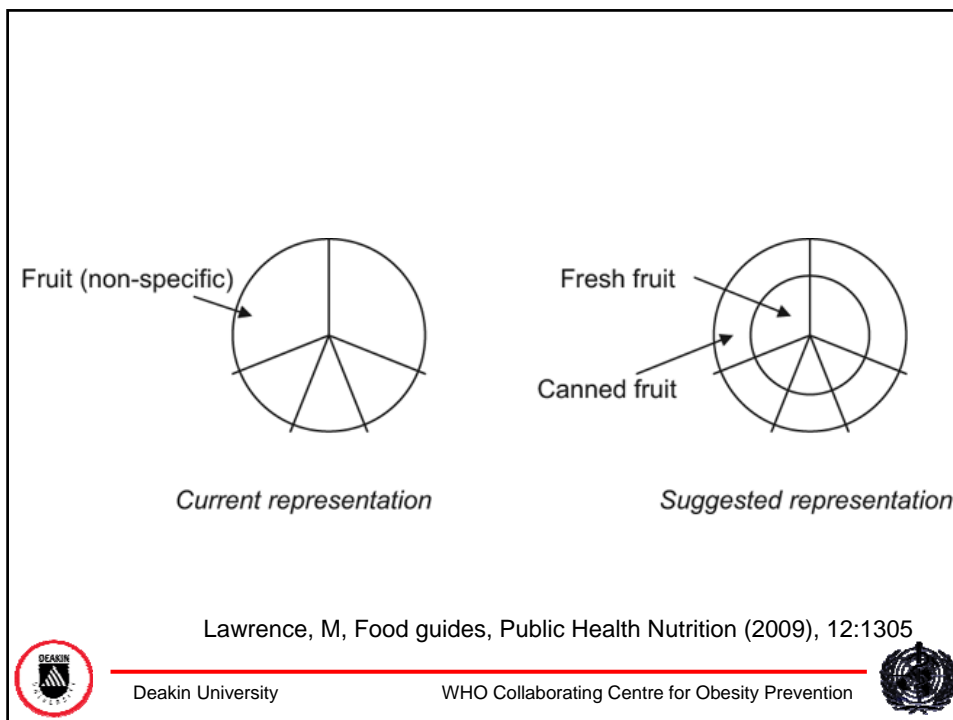
- NRVs (promoting over-consumption?)
 - General increase in levels
- Review of CFG
 - “... consider social equity, ethnic diversity and environmental issues.”
- Review of DGs
 - “Undertake a systematic review of the national and international literature on food, dietary patterns, nutrition and environmental sustainability”
 - http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/your_health/healthy/nutrition/review.htm#other



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Concluding comments

- Environment and nutrition are inter-related and their policies are integrally linked
- 7 priorities for increasing understanding
- The analytical framework provides a strategic tool to help organise and prioritise policy interventions
- Policy action is needed now – business as usual is not an option and solutions wont emerge of their own volition
- Garnering political will
 - Assembling the evidence
 - Alignment with economic arguments
 - Highlighting community awareness