

Long-term food security and safety

In brief

- Long term food security has economic, environmental and social aspects and is essential for healthy nutrition and public health.
- Scientific knowledge and actual dietary habits are very often not in line and nutrition related diseases are increasing in the population.
- Sustainable food production is getting more attention, yet overall there are plenty of options for the Austrian food system to become more sustainable considering a long-term perspective and a global view.

What is it about?

From science's point of view, there is currently a discrepancy between the actual nutritional behaviour and nutritional recommendations. Despite increasing nutritional awareness and quality- assured information transfer, nutritional knowledge is still lacking in the general population. Furthermore, perceived food risks are somewhat contradicting actual diet-related diseases.

In addition, there is a variety of gender-specific differences in knowledge, interest and actual nutritional behaviour. Women are more sensible to nutritional questions, have better nutritional knowledge and a more conscious nutritional behaviour than men. Also, women and men are exposed to different risks with regard to food based on different nutritional behaviours as well as different nutrient requirements. A strongly increasing prevalence of nutrition-dependent diseases in Austria induces a need for gender-specific and setting-oriented prevention that meets both scientific requirements as

well as the wishes of the citizens regarding the food sector – and especially for products.

Thus, a collaboration of the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES) and ITA has identified expectations of women and men on nutrition, health issues and food security. Five citizen consultations in the cities of Vienna (twice), Graz, Linz and Innsbruck generated 'visions of Austrian citizens on healthy eating and food safety'. In sum about 60 diverse citizens developed 52 visions, which heavily overlapped in content including topics such as:

- education and comprehensive information
- informed decision and coaching
- considering biodiversity
- production of food and supply concepts that consider environmental and health protection
- gender perspective
- creating motivation for a healthy diet
- self-determination for a higher quality of life



What is the future of our food production? Regional? Global?

After analysing the visions' content regarding underlying and overarching issues, experts from several AGES units, such as food security, food safety, public health or risk assessment, developed recommendations based on the citizens' visions. These recommendations aim at policies, research and development as well as services and education. The project team aggregated visions and recommendations in two scenarios with about 30 sub-scenarios concerned with the future of nutrition, also considering a gender perspective. Finally, citizens and experts reviewed the scenarios in a second round of consultations and selected the top ten recommendations.

Basic data

Project title:	Future foods for men & women
Project team:	M. Sotoudeh, N. Gudowsky
Duration:	09/2013 – 02/2016
Funded by:	BMVIT, FFG, AGES
Website:	futurefoods.ages.at

Key results

Two scenarios describe desirable futures for 2030 that are based upon citizens' visions, as well as the corresponding experts' recommendations. Some overarching topics were discussed in several forums and also prioritized by experts. Here, education and awareness raising, resource conservation as well as partial self-sufficiency have played an essential role.

Scenario 1 describes a paradigm shift by means of using the knowledge of resource conservation in agriculture. Within this scenario, wide dissemination of agricultural know-how as well as knowledge of resource conservation, storage facilities and food preservation is a reality. Providing sufficient green areas and redesigning urban areas suitable for agriculture are partial prerequisites for promoting 'urban gardening' and effectively governing voluntary work. Within the scenario this leads to partial self-sufficiency of cities. Raising consumer awareness towards environmental protection has led to the significant reduction of overconsumption of resources. This scenario distinguishes two main situations compared with existing conditions: a stronger role of voluntary work in society and a strengthened governance of markets.



Barley on the balcony? Futureproofing cities by providing significantly more green spaces

Scenario 2 focusses on consumers' free choices supported by precise information on products in the free market. A main condition of this scenario is that food consumed in Austria is produced globally. Through advanced digitisation of product information, data on production conditions and properties of food is available and easily accessible. People have comprehensive knowledge about their own genetic predisposition and can easily search for and select suitable foods for themselves through individualized data filters and tracking systems. An effective control system ensures transparency. The scenario therefore focusses on individual consumer's self-determination.

What to do?

There are plenty of options to increase long-term food security and safety. Based on results of this participatory foresight study, implementation is possible in many areas with immediate effect.

- Adopt the topic 'food security' with respect to production and sustainability, as well as courses on 'healthy and safe food' in the school curriculum; convey quality-assured information to all.
- Consider long-term food security in spatial planning of agricultural areas, e.g. regarding fast growth of urban areas and prevention of sealing the soil surface.
- Encourage joint use of production areas and examine the extent to which voluntary work can be used for community production of food; provide suitable areas and know-how for their sustainable management.
- Strengthen and increase the variety and biodiversity in the food supply; promote awareness of an efficient cost-benefit ratio with a focus on Austrian food (e.g. reduction of transport routes for ecological logistics or of avoidable packaging in the production chain).
- Focus more on examining the preventive and curative potential of nutrition and its possible applications; especially regard personalized nutrition factors, such as gender or age.

Further reading

Kiefer, I., Drott, F. (2016) Future foods 4 Men & Women. Summary of project results (in German). AGES futurefoods.ages.at/fileadmin/Redakteure_FF00DS/Broschuere_Future_foods_4_Men_Women.pdf

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