

# Trends in food CONSUMPTION

Dietary practices are constantly evolving in response to individual, social, economic and other drivers. How can we accelerate the adoption of more 'sustainable' diets?

Sustainable food consumption implies that people, on average, choose or are offered food products that:

- use fewer natural resources and have less impact on the environment than today; and
- are produced, processed and distributed in ways that meet or exceed minimum global social standards.

There is strong evidence that both human health outcomes and the environment would benefit from the adoption of more sustainable diets.

Many consumers are looking for healthier foods and they are also increasingly aware of the environmental benefits of dietary change. However, while environmental sustainability is important to consumers it usually ranks below taste, price, health and convenience.

On the one hand, we see growing interest in 'organic', 'plant-rich' or 'free-from' diets, especially among consumers in the Global North. Other dietary preferences that have emerged in recent years include preferences for 'seasonal' and 'local' foods.

At the same time, economic growth and rising incomes are driving increased consumption of highly-processed convenience foods and meat and dairy products in many emerging markets, as well as more online food shopping.

## PRODUCERS BOTH RESPOND TO AND INFLUENCE CONSUMER TRENDS

Between 2012-2016, across 86 global markets, there was a 13% increase in launches of new vegetarian food and drink products and a 257% increase in vegan product launches (Mintel 2017). A key area of innovation is meat and dairy substitutes, with both producers and retailers catering for growing demand. In Europe, for example, sales of meat substitutes increased four-fold from 2013-2017 (University of Hohenheim 2018).

## EXTERNAL SHOCKS: COVID-19 AND WAR IN UKRAINE

Food systems are prone to external shocks, which can result in severe food insecurity as well as shifting diets. Both the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have disrupted food supplies, reducing access to food for many people, while also influencing consumer preferences. It remains unclear to what extent food supplies and consumer preferences may have changed and how this will affect food sustainability over the long-term.

