

Sustainable Nutrition Styles – Managing Nutrition in Everyday Life

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Research Background

Food change – strategies for socio-ecological transformations in the social action field ‘environment – nutrition – health’

- Five Research Institutes from Germany and Austria
- Funded by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research, Focal Point “Social Ecological Research”
- Duration 07/2002 – 09/2005

Food Change: Overall Research Goals

Starting point:

- Problem presented by a non-sustainable approach to nutritional affluence

Objective:

- Strategies for a food change, i.e. to bring about **a more sustainable form of nutrition**
(= *environmentally compatible and health promoting; products and structures geared to everyday use and allowing for socio-cultural diversity*)

Questions:

- What **societal changes** are called for in order to accommodate sustainable nutritional practice in everyday life?
- What contribution needs to be made by **various groups of players** (politics, agriculture, industry, commerce, out-of-home suppliers, consumer organisations, health insurance companies, schools, etc.)?
- **Initiating social change in order to facilitate and promote changes in individuals' daily lives**

■ Comprehensive Understanding of Sustainable Nutrition (1)

■ Environmentally compatible

- Avoiding pollution and other risks to the environment (precautionary orientation)
- Also: creating **products and infrastructures** that promote environmentally compatible nutrition

■ Health promoting

- Adequate provision with healthy foods along with the avoidance of malnutrition and undernourishment
- Also: **creating basic conditions** that make for physical, mental and social well-being

■ Socio-cultural diversity

- Sustainable nutrition must allow for **different action frames** (to accommodate the pluralisation of lifestyles, different life circumstances and gender approaches, different income groups)

Comprehensive Understanding of Sustainable Nutrition (2)

■ Practicability in everyday life

Sustainable nutrition should be **practicable in everyday life** and capable of being incorporated into any individual's daily lifestyle, i.e.:

- Products and structures must be such that they can be **easily integrated into existing daily routines** and/or be compatible with them, or themselves become routine.
- They should help **facilitate domestic management of nutrition.**
- This also calls for the drawing up and communication of nutrition-relevant data to allow simple orientation, **cut down on complexity and thus render the process less of a burden.**
- Practicable guiding principles for sustainable nutrition are needed as a source of **orientation in everyday life.**

Sub-Project: “Nutrition in everyday life”

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Conceptual Framework



Everyday Life – A Sociological Perspective

- Everyday life is structured by **social practices**
 - More or less institutionalised **collective** phenomena
 - Shaped by **routines** that help to reduce the complexity of decision-making and greatly facilitate daily existence
- External requirements must be reconciled with people's own wishes and needs as well as those of other members of the household. The organization of daily life calls for the broad **integration** of many aspects
- These numerous demands are to be put into a form that can be lived out on a daily basis in order to experience everyday life as a **“coherent whole”**
- Organising one's daily life requires appropriate situational and context-related **everyday cognition and skills**
- **Everyday life comprises a complex set of interrelated activities ruled by preconditions**
- **Societal changes increase the complexity of everyday life**

Gender and Everyday Life

A gender perspective entails ...

- more than just “women/men” as a socio-demographic “enumerative category”;
- The category “gender” is related to age, household structure, life stage, etc.: **gender and diversity.**
- consideration of **gender relations**: orientations pertaining to partnership (traditional partnership model) and relationships “lived” by couples.

The focus thus extends to ...

- **people’s responsibility as providers, along with the division of responsibility and labour** between the sexes (and also between the generations),
- **the skills and expertise** required in daily life and the running of a household,
- **biographical changes** (moving in together/starting a family, taking up one’s first job/going into retirement, birth of children/children leaving home, physical changes)

and their significance for sustainable everyday action.

Everyday Life in Flux

Social and economic change

- Increased differentiation of lifestyles
- Flexibilisation and deregulation of gainful employment
 - Disintegration of rigid time structures
 - New scope for individuals to arrange their everyday lives
 - Increased time and effort devoted to co-ordinating the household
- Change in gender relations: growing numbers of women in gainful employment, and yet still very male little participation when it comes to doing the housework and looking after others
- **People are facing increasing demands in the structuring of their everyday routines and this is placing a growing if not excessive burden on them, particularly the women**

Changes to Everyday Nutrition

Simplification

- Cheap, simple and quick
- Increase in eating outside the home
- Disintegration of fixed, binding mealtimes: “Food twenty-four-hours seven-days-a-week”
- “Loss” of the social and communicative nature of mealtimes

Enhancement

- Health and fitness
- Enjoyment and pleasure
- Stylisation and prestige
- ‘Organic’ trend
- Functional foods
- Food as social event
- Cooking with friends

Growing concern about diseases linked to incorrect nutrition and the subsequent cost to society

Research Design



■ Research Design (1)

- Objective: **to examine how nutrition is embedded in everyday life**
- Combination of qualitative research (stage 1) and quantitative survey (stage 2)
- Universe: all individuals from the age of 18 living in their own household, representative sample: **2,039**
- Fieldwork: February/March 2004

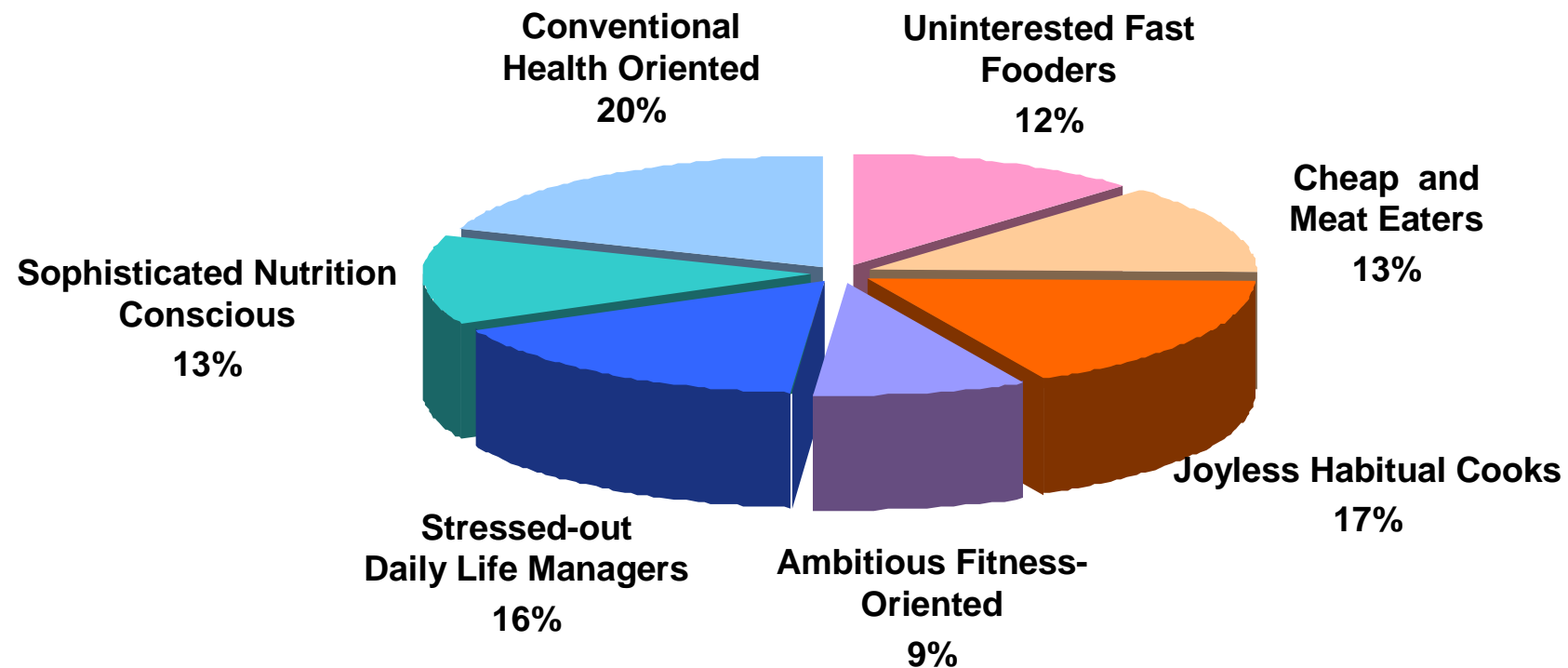
Research Design (2)

- Socio-ecological lifestyle approach (three dimensions)
 - **Social situation:**
Life phase (age, household structure, children), education, occupation and income
 - **Orientations:**
Relating to lifestyle (values, basic attitudes);
relating to nutrition and health, purchase and preparation of food, meals
 - **Behaviour pertaining to nutrition:**
Food preparation; qualitative composition of meals, when and where they are taken (“24-h recall”); body mass index
 - **Examination of the connection between nutrition orientations and behaviour, lifestyle and social situation**

Typology of Nutrition Styles



Typology of Nutrition Styles



Uninterested Fast Fooders (1)

Nutrition orientations and behaviour

- Distinct disinterest in the subject of nutrition; little willingness to give any thought to a healthy, balanced diet
- Food is taken at irregular intervals and whenever one feels like it; meals predominantly take place outside the home (refectory, canteen, fast-food restaurant)
- People rarely cook for themselves and, when they do, it is done quickly, with little effort and heavy use of convenience products.
Hardly any interest in cooking among men *and* women
- Shopping means stress; advertising tends to be used as stimulus
- ➔ Disintegration of conventional rhythms, and “dedomestication” of nutrition
- ➔ Functional understanding of health: “the body as a machine”
(functional food)

Uninterested Fast Fooders (2)

Lifestyle orientations

- Strong need for independence and flexibility
- Work is a means to an end; in their leisure time people feel a need for strong stimuli and experiences within the peer group

Sociodemographics

- Men very much in the majority
 - Predominantly younger age groups
 - Both basic and higher educational qualifications
 - Single households predominate alongside DINKS
 - Over half work full time; many are still undergoing training
 - Below-average incomes
- Young adults in the pre-family phase

Cheap and Meat Eaters (1)

Nutrition orientations and behaviour

- Food must be inexpensive and uncomplicated; health plays a secondary role
- Food is taken whenever one feels like it: it should taste good and fill one up
- Little effort is invested in cooking (this includes the men); frequent consumption of ready-made meals and convenience products
- Meat is an ideal foodstuff as it lends itself to simple and creative preparation
- Organic foods are rejected (too expensive, not flavoursome, with unclear benefits)
- Simplifying life by relaxing conventional rhythms and resorting to convenience options
- Meal times do not follow any fixed pattern. There is no need to cook a warm meal each day. Shared mealtimes are declining in significance

Cheap and Meat Eaters (2)

Lifestyle orientations

- Gainful employment is thought to be monotonous and a burden
- Leisure time: need for diversion, fun and entertainment
- Household: desire for simplified procedures and uncomplicated solutions

Sociodemographics

- Women and men are represented in almost equal measure
- Age focus under 45 years
- More likely to have basic and intermediate educational qualifications
- Slight over-representation of households with several children
- The majority are gainfully employed, predominantly in full-time work; there are also many unemployed
- Average and low incomes prevail

Joyless Habitual Cooks (1)

Nutrition orientations and behaviour

- Little real interest in the subject of nutrition and hence little awareness of what goes to make a healthy diet
- Fixed habits and routines when it comes to shopping and cooking (hardly any convenience products)
- Food is taken very regularly (warm meals at home), but is merely a necessary evil and rarely associated with pleasure and enjoyment
- The price of foodstuffs is of paramount importance
- Attributable to people's advanced age (post-war generation); firmly established eating habits

Joyless Habitual Cooks (2)

Lifestyle orientations

- Basic values: humility and security
- Withdrawal: social life no longer plays much of a role
- Strongly governed by habit; very unlikely to be up for anything new
- Not very body positive/in tune with their bodies

Sociodemographics

- Over three quarters are over the age of 60 and retired
- Mostly with basic educational qualifications
- One and two-member households are strongly over-represented
- Low incomes

Ambitious Fitness-Oriented (1)

Nutrition orientations and behaviour

- Primary purpose of food is to maintain one's efficiency and fitness
 - People enjoy cooking (primarily at the weekend) and cook creative and varied dishes
 - Their eating is very controlled (for the sake of their appearance)
 - They value high-quality foodstuffs and price is not much of an issue
 - They place disproportionately strong trust in organic products and also make use of health supplements
- People react to the everyday strains of their job and private life with pragmatic solutions: flexible mealtimes, not cooking a hot meal every day, eating out, and convenience products go without saying
- At the same time: they endeavour to eat with their partner or family at least once a day

Ambitious Fitness-Oriented (2)

Lifestyle orientations

- Achievement and success at work are of great significance
- Cultural interests and social engagement play an important role
- Strong need for flexibility and control over one's own time
- A lot of importance is attached to personal appearance and one's figure

Sociodemographics

- Women are slightly over-represented
- Middle age groups prevail
- Children are present in one in three households
- Both partners normally have jobs; the majority work full time
- Many free-lancers/independent professionals/self-employed people
- The highest household income of all types

Stressed-out Daily Life Managers (1)

Nutrition orientations and behaviour

- People set themselves the standard (for the sake of the children) of cooking regular, varied meals with fresh ingredients
 - This standard (few convenience products and out-of-home consumption) often clashes with their lack of time: cooking each day becomes a tiresome duty
 - Family rituals are, however, important: eating together at least once a day without any distractions (TV)
 - Meat is taken for granted when it comes to quick meals; tendency to reject factory farming
 - People have a certain affinity for functional and chemical additives; this type is somewhat sceptical about organic foods
- Stressful balancing act between (barely realisable) high standards for feeding the family and the exhausting demands of everyday life

Stressed-out Daily Life Managers (2)

Lifestyle orientations

- Great importance of family and home
- Longing for “freedom from obligation”:
More time for oneself and one’s personal needs

Sociodemographics

- Three quarters of this type are women
- Predominantly married, between 25 and 45
- Average educational qualifications are over-represented
- Mostly households with one or two children, but with a strong over-representation of households with several children
- Many either don’t work or work part time; one third work full time
- Relatively low income

Sophisticated Nutrition-Conscious (1)

Nutrition orientations and behaviour

- Strong awareness of the links between diet and health (lowest body mass index of all the types)
 - Appreciation of a communicative food culture free from compulsive ritualisation
 - Attention is paid to the quality and freshness of foods; regional origin also plays a role (lots of fruit and vegetables)
 - People turn to organic foods that promise more enjoyment as well as being good for both mind and body; they are willing to pay a premium here
 - Strong rejection of convenience products; growing tendency to do without meat, also in protest against factory farming
- Great sensibility for the holistic significance of nutrition

Sophisticated Nutrition-Conscious (2)

Lifestyle orientations

- Strong cultural interests; social sensibility
- Desire for flexibility and control over one's own time
- Information and communication technologies are used as a matter of course

Sociodemographics

- Middle age groups (25 to 45) are over-represented
- High level of education: three quarters are academics
- Predominantly single/2-member households; families with one child are slightly over-represented
- Disproportionately high number of people working full time, and students
- Average to high incomes

Conventional Health-Oriented (1)

Nutrition orientations and behaviour

- Link between diet and health is present in people's minds
- Enjoyment of and commitment to food and cooking: a relaxed and creative approach to cooking, and regular, communicative mealtimes (little out-of-home consumption)
- People's love of food is often accompanied by the "fight against flab" (disproportionately high number of people who are slightly overweight)
- Important factors are quality, freshness, regional origin, and seasonal offers (few convenience products). Price does, however, play an important role
- Open to organic foodstuffs, both for reasons of enjoyment and health
- ➔ Need to eat healthily as one grows older
- ➔ But: sensuous aspects and the joy of eating clash with weight problems

Conventional Health-Oriented (2)

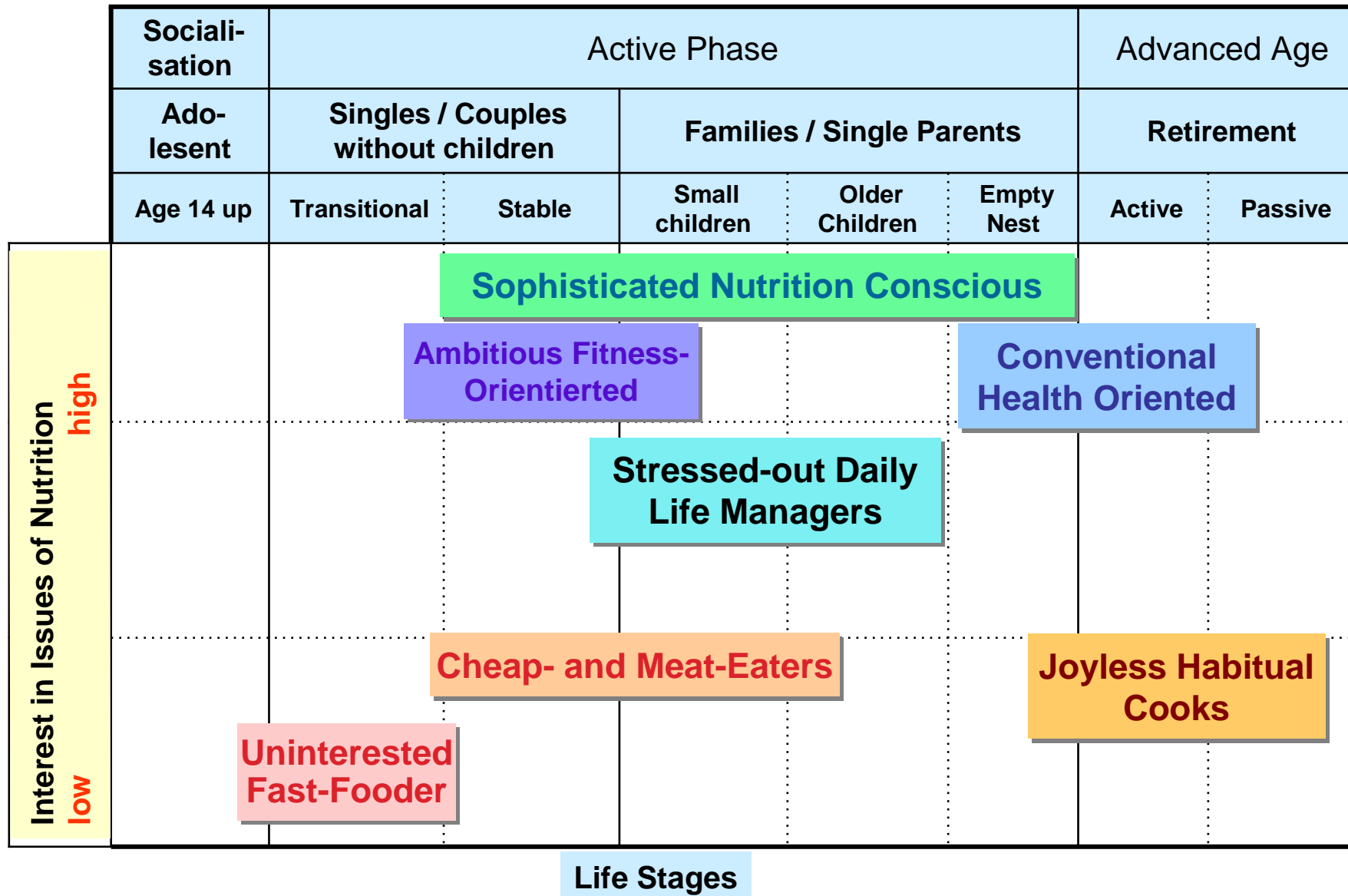
Lifestyle orientations

- Great importance of family and home; women have their own view of their role beyond the traditional call of duty
- Social engagement goes without saying
- Body positive/in tune with their bodies and health, and attach strong importance to a well-groomed appearance

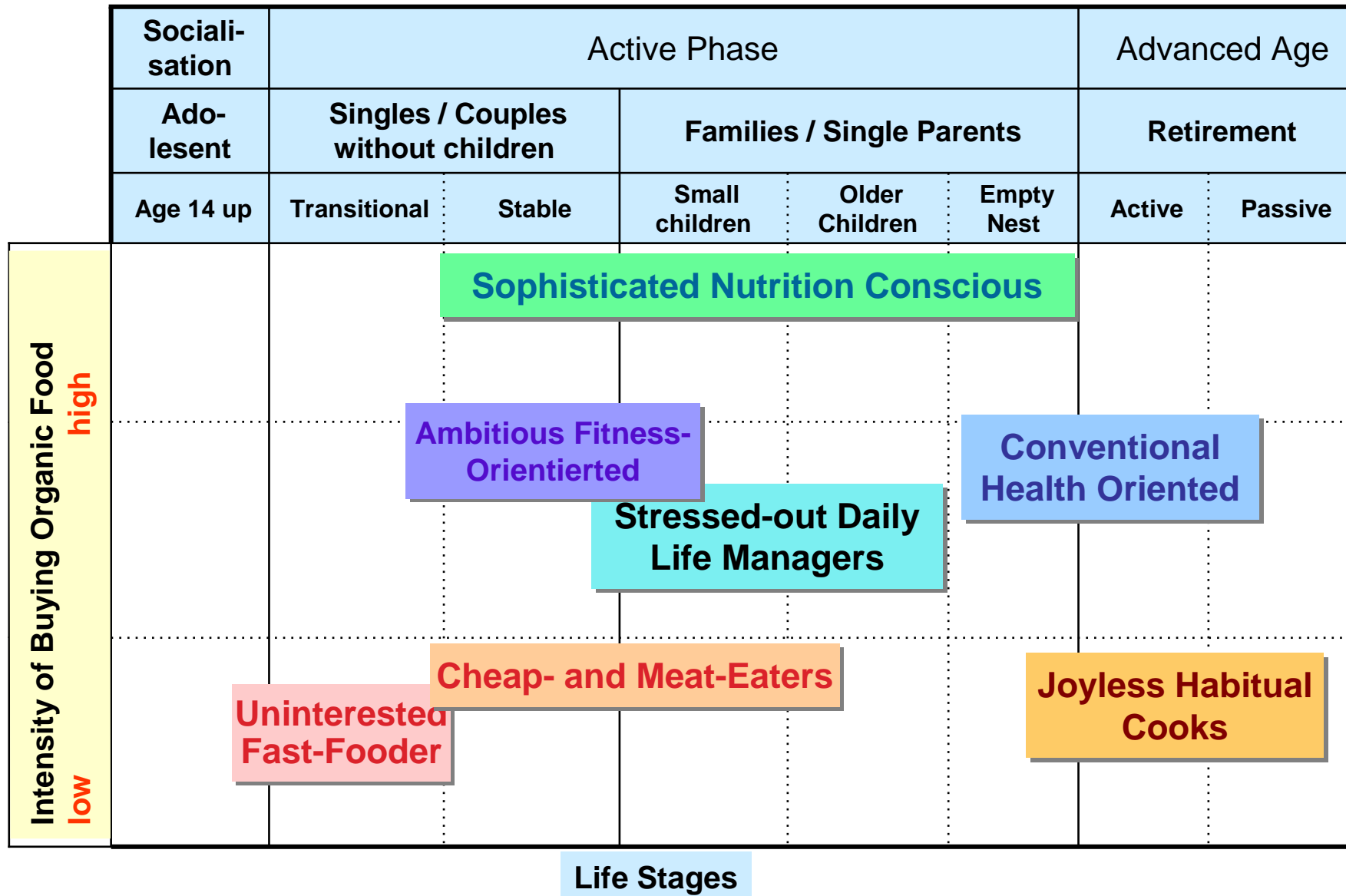
Sociodemographics

- Women are slightly over-represented
- Average and older age groups
- Predominantly basic educational qualifications
- Many single and two-member households (“empty nesters”)
- Low to average incomes
- Lots of pensioners and retired people

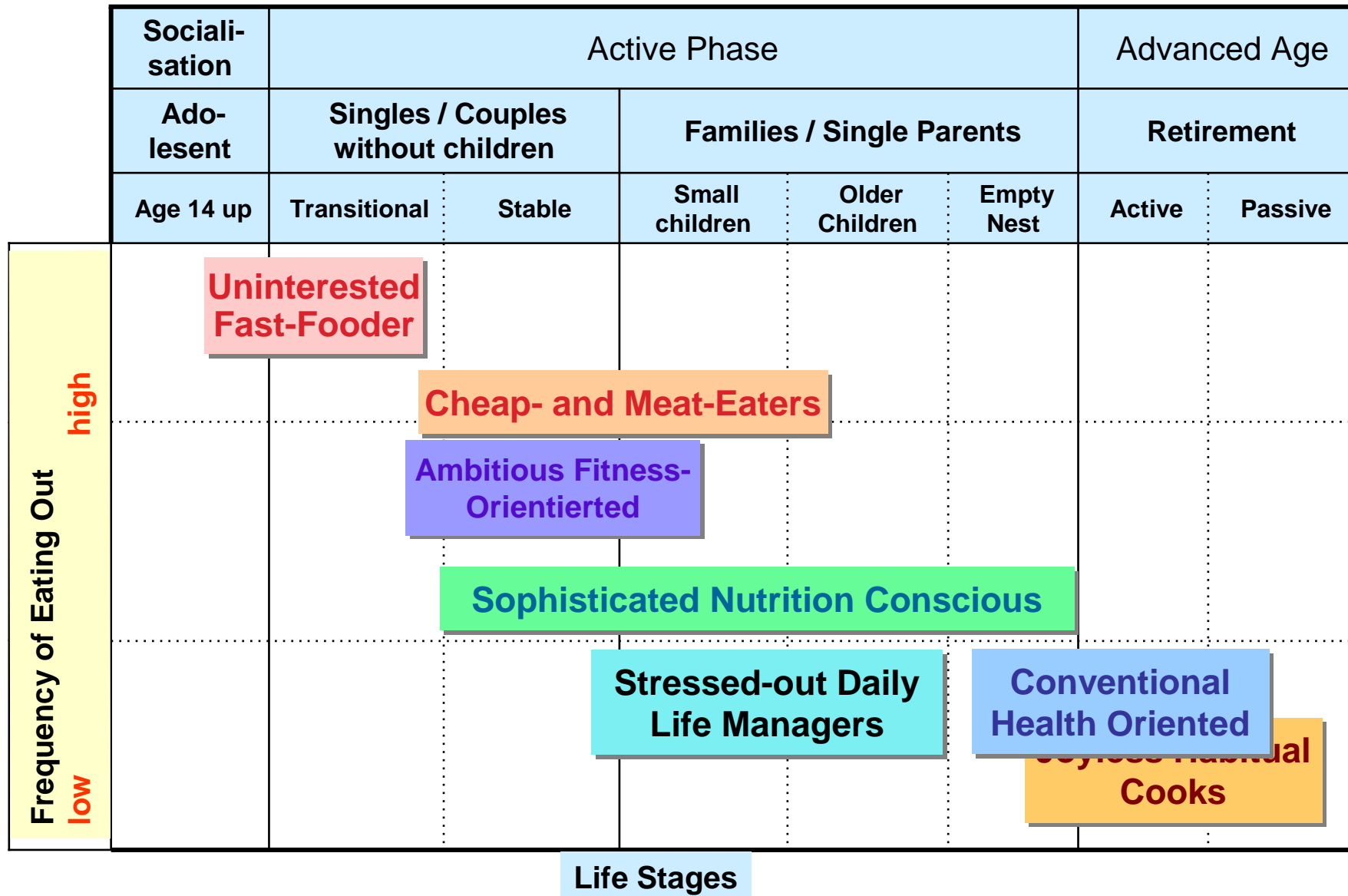
Nutrition Styles: Interest in Issues of Nutrition



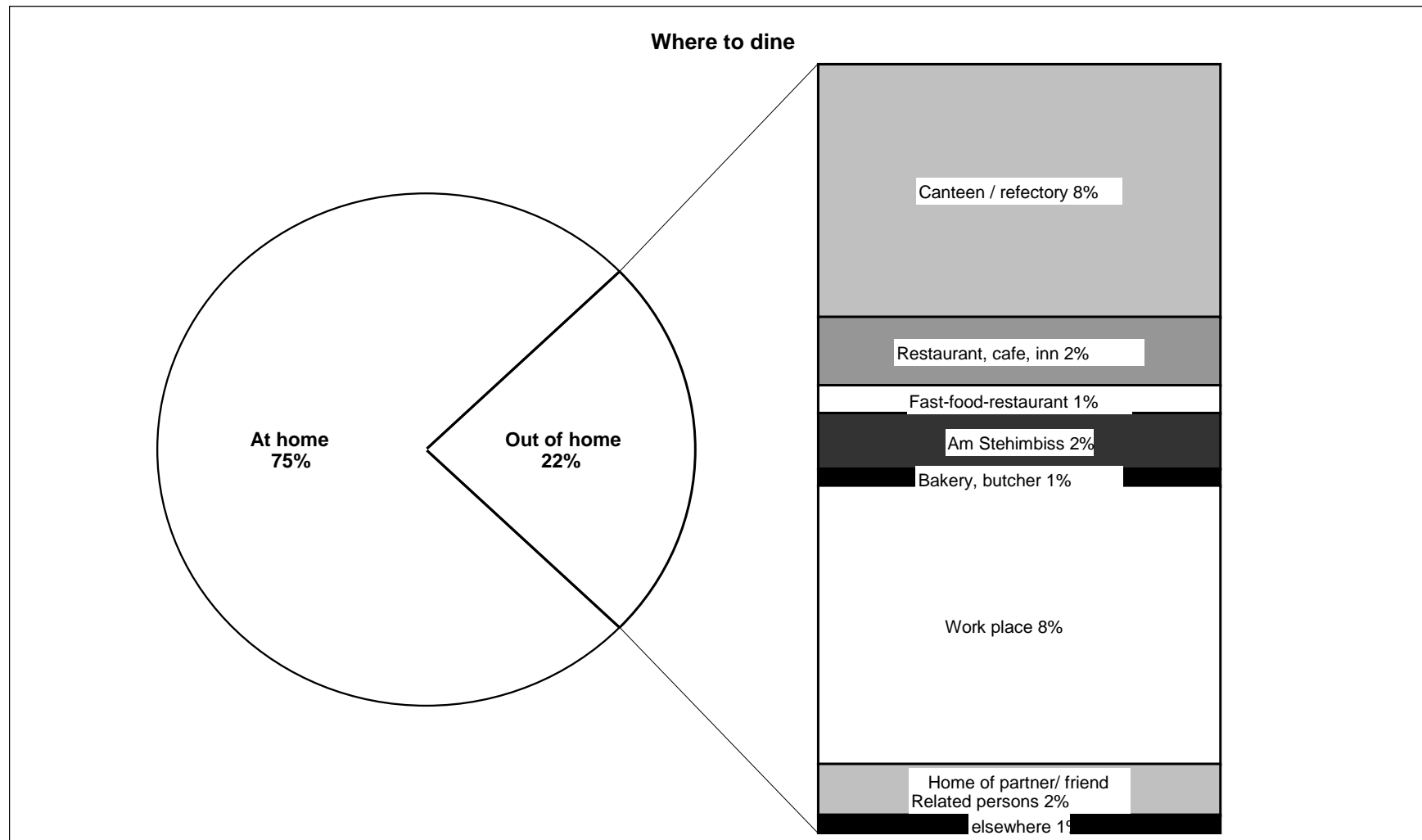
Nutrition Styles: Intensity of Buying Organic Food



Nutrition Styles: Eating Out

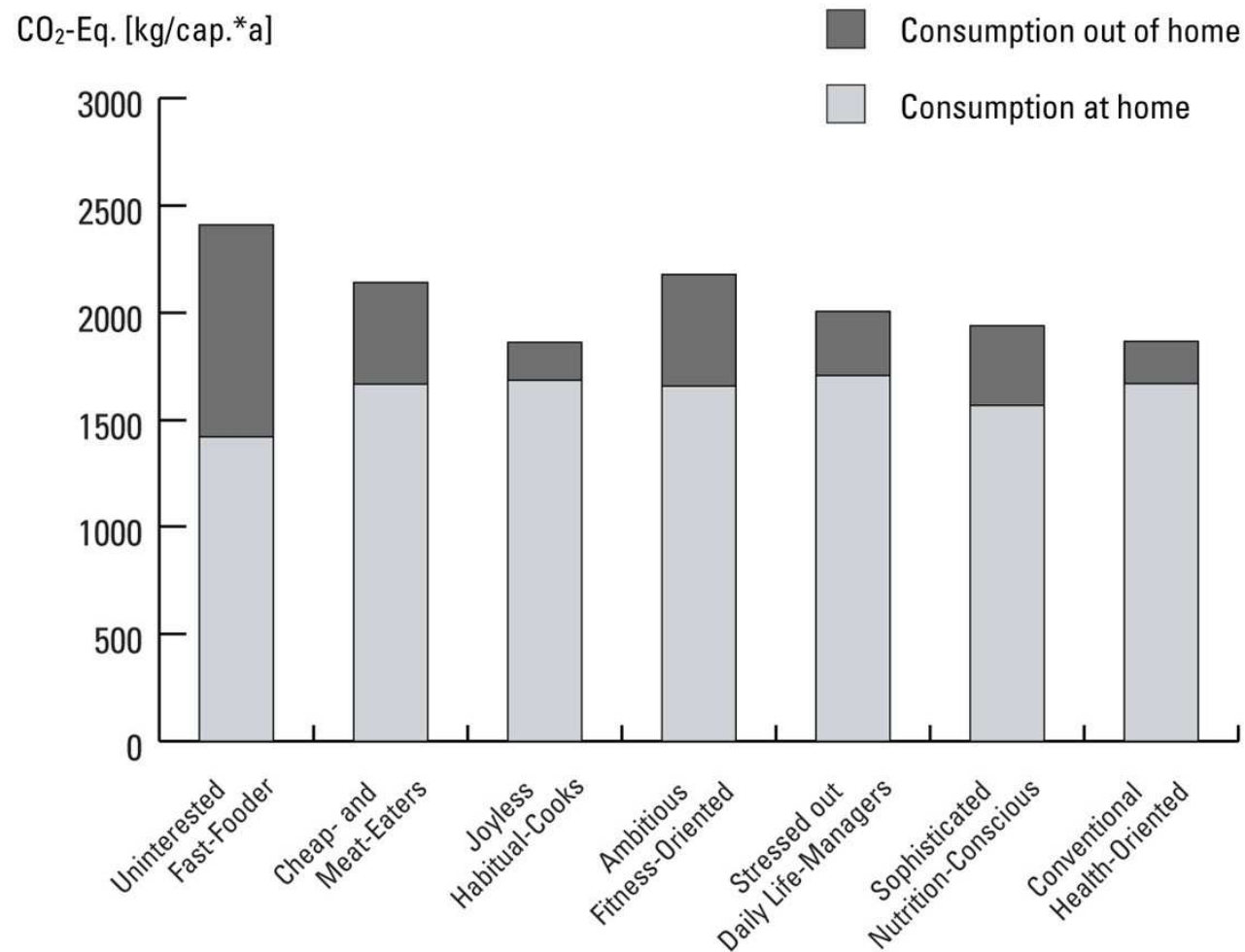


Where to Dine (on weekdays)





Carbon footprint of Nutrition Styles



Source: Eberle et al. 2006

Everyday life: starting point for a food change

The typology of nutrition styles...

- provides a differentiated image of everyday nutrition
- reveals people's needs and wishes along with possibilities and barriers with regard to potential action in different lifestyle set-ups
- puts into perspective widespread views of everyday nutrition: "unveiling the myths"
- enables identification of everyday strains and overexertion as a central obstacle throughout the various nutrition styles
- provides stimuli for a target group specific structuring of foods and mealtimes, information and advisory offers

“Unveiling” the myths

- Growing significance of out-of-home consumption and the shifting of nutrition into the public arena, but no total **“dedomestication of nutrition”**
- Strong appreciation of and desire for shared mealtimes and a communicative food culture: no **“situative eating alone”**
- Spread of flexible mealtimes as a tribute to the demands of everyday life and differing daily schedules; no **“derhythmication” of everyday nutrition**
- No **loss of food culture**”; instead, the forming of new action patterns:

Bringing together external demands, internalised social demands and individual motives, along with time and financial resources in the context of market circumstances and social framework

Strain and overexertion as a key impediment

- Need to relieve the burdens of everyday life; desire for simplification, reduced complexity
- Differing nature and degree of the strains imposed by nutrition styles
 - The time and effort required
 - The financial burden
 - The burden that comes from lack of guidance (information and nutrition role models for emulation in everyday life)
 - Poor availability of sustainable nutrition offers (supply structures)
 - The burden that comes from a lack of support (from outside: nutrition in certain settings; in the home context)
- Gender-specifics of strain and overexertion: in most cases, the work and responsibility that nutrition involves is left entirely up to the women

Results for practical implementation:

Action principles for a food change

Action principles for a nutritional turnaround

- Sharing responsibility
- Strengthening skills and expertise
- Bundling qualities
- Building structures
- ... **clarify the organisational task facing the players**

■ Action principle “Sharing responsibility”

- Sustainable nutrition doesn't just require personal responsibility on the part of consumers. It also requires **society to bear responsibility**:
relief and support for households from professional practitioners
- **Shared responsibility** for sustainable nutrition within the possibilities and scope available to the players concerned
- Responsibility both for the **provision of sustainable nutrition offers** and for **sustainable nutritional practice**

■ Action principle “Strengthening skills and expertise”

- A food change calls for the **continuous strengthening of skills and expertise**: strengthening people’s ability to translate theory and practical skills into appropriate action in concrete situations
- For **consumers** this embraces cooking, consumption, financial, health and media expertise as well as a general ability to make judgements and decisions (everyday expertise)
- The goal for **professional practitioners** is to strengthen their expertise with a view to organising and implementing sustainable nutrition in their occupational action context (professional expertise)

Action principle “Bundling qualities”

- What is lacking at present is a **bundling of qualities** in products and services, along with approaches that promote an integration of such offers into everyday situations (eating and shopping situations)
- Bundling qualities is all about **linking different consumer demands**: “bio”, “regional”, “health-promoting”, “welfare-oriented livestock husbandry”, fair trading” and everyday practicality (“convenient”, strengthening of skills and expertise)
= broader understanding of quality
- The bundling of qualities presupposes a **stronger co-operation** between different players/groups of players

Action principle “Building structures”

- There is a current lack of integrated and cross-sector approaches of universal relevance to the players concerned that are designed for long-term implementation: **setting up of binding and enduring structures**
- **A change in the everyday nutritional routine of organisations** (e.g. schools, companies): establishment of nutrition as a relevant issue, checking procedures and corporate culture with regard to nutrition and quality of life
- Structures that **reinforce nutritional skills and expertise**, promote the **development and realisation of quality concepts** for sustainable nutritional practice and **facilitate the different forms of shared responsibility** required

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