

# A healthy and sustainable food environment for healthy people and planet!

## A call to action:

We, the undersigned, want to present this call to action to you,

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[LOCAL GOVERNMENT] to urge you to take action towards a sustainable food environment.

The world is facing a tremendous challenging situation. We have an abundance of food around us. The abundance of food around us give us the impression that 'it couldn't get any better. ' But if you look closer, you will see that there are huge errors in our food system. We're facing a worldwide growth of overweight problems and obesity. And the majority of chronic illnesses are related to this.

On top of that, our current food system has a huge impact on the planet and its resources. We also face a biodiversity loss of around 50% in Europe. Only a few years ago 90% of the vertebrate land animals lived in the wild. Today that has dwindled down to 5%. That means that 30% of the population is human and the balance of 65% are farm animals. Moreover, our current agricultural model causes soil degradation and negatively impacts climate change. This, in turn, causes water shortages and heavy disturbances on the Nitrogen and Phosphorus cycles. If we keep producing and consuming as we do now, no fertile soil will be left to feed the 9 to 11 billion people we expect to have on this planet by 2050.

It is clear that our current food system and choices have an incredibly negative impact on our planet and our health. We need a system change. We need to rethink the way we produce our food and we need to rethink the way we eat.

That's easier said than done. For many years governments, NGO's, dieticians, etc. have tried to tell us again and again what we need to eat more of (e.g. fruits and vegetables) and what we need to eat less of (saturated fats, sugar, salt). The results? Little to none. Not surprisingly, research shows us that information alone does not lead to behavioural change. People can be told how they should eat. In an environment that gives you incentives for exactly the opposite behaviour – unhealthy food with a high footprint is the cheap(est),

most available, most visible option and all other people around you are choosing it - the chance we will change is minimal.

The main determinant for our daily food choices lies in our food environment. That is, what we get offered or what we are presented with or seduced to buy in our daily lives while moving from A to B. To mention a few: our supermarket, the advertorials on our social media, the snack bar on the corner, the canteen at our work or school, the restaurants we see or visit, the advertisements along the road. In short, every confrontation with food or drinks. Unfortunately, our reality right now is that our food environment nudges us towards unhealthy and unsustainable choices.

However, if we were to incentivise our choices of healthy and sustainable, it would be easy to change. We would make healthy and sustainable the default, by making it easy to choose, most common, most visible, the tastiest options, and most affordable. In other words: we would change the food environment to a new normal. Given this, we would, by nature, adapt to a healthy and sustainable diet, whether we are informed or not informed of the health benefits.

In order to reduce the planetary impact and improve our health, our food choices have to change. A food environment filled with healthy and sustainable food options will lead to healthier and sustainable diet choices, leading to healthier citizens and planet.

The Corona crisis made these health and planetary issues even more urgent than they already were. We're at a tipping point. World leaders are stating that they will do "whatever it takes" to tackle the consequences of the corona crisis. In order to build a healthy foundation for the future ahead of us, we have to go to a better normal, one that increases the health of the world's population and ecological environment. We need a new normal, a default that is sustainable and healthy. Luckily, we can use this opportunity to act fast and make an enormous positive impact on our health and environment. Therefore, we, the undersigned, who are concerned citizens urge our leaders to:

1. Take a stand on the impact our food environment has on the citizen's health and the planetary costs
2. Develop a vision for the local food environment
3. Take action for fundamental change towards a healthy and sustainable food environment

**Signatories:**