

Concurrent Session 2: Nutrition Australia Symposium: Food Sustainability

The case for food sustainability: the state of the notion

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The term sustainable development was used by the Brundtland Commission and it is now the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development as that which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (1). The field of sustainable development can be broken into three parts: environmental, economic and sociopolitical sustainability. Indigenous peoples have argued that the fourth pillar is cultural sustainability.

Nutrition scientists are active in this area following the joint initiative of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences and the World Health Policy Forum which supported the development of a project known as the New Nutrition Science (2). This project identified nutrition, with its application in food and nutrition policy, as a science with great width and breadth of vision and scope, in order that it can fully contribute to the preservation, maintenance, development and sustenance of life on Earth. Following a workshop held in Giessen in 2005, a declaration known as the Giessen Declaration stated that 'The overall principles that should guide nutrition science are ethical in nature. Its principles should also be guided by the philosophies of co-responsibility and sustainability, by the life-course and human rights approaches, and by understanding of evolution, history and ecology'.

There has been a significant debate in the scientific literature and the media about global warming (3,4) and what should the response of countries and various industries be to global warming. This debate has led to discussion about creating a system of carbon offsets for industry to deter from wasteful and environmentally harmful food production practices. In this regard it is of interest that Tesco's, a major supermarket chain in the UK has pledged to revolutionise its business to become "a leader in helping to create a low-carbon economy" with a raft of new measures to help combat climate change, including putting new labels on every one of the 70,000 products it sells so that shoppers can compare carbon costs between products (5).

This paper will consider the current confusion in the media and the web, highlighting the range of activities being discussed in relation to sustainable food production (systems).

References

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