Consumer perspective to sustainable agriculture

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I focus on the perspective of the consumers and the challenges faced by them in making sustainable food choices. Consumers are increasingly concerned of the sustainability of agriculture and express increased willingness to pay higher prices for sustainable agriculture products. However, increased concern has not affected consumers’ actual consumption patterns as expected. Information of sustainable agricultural practices can potentially increase the value of agriculture products. From a social psychological point of view, information matters when consumers perceive it as being personally relevant to them and when they trust the information source. Moreover, consumer choices made as part of daily practices whereby changes in choices would create tensions in maintaining social relations and social expectations of “proper meals”. Therefore, a change toward more sustainable consumer choices involves a cultural change. Researchers, policy-makers and NGOs could help consumers to perceive information of sustainable agricultural practices as personally relevant and increase trust between stakeholders. Here the role of communication between stakeholders is essential. Stakeholders need new communication platforms where they could directly meet each other and exchange ideas. These platforms can facilitate the creation of new forms of cooperation, as well as a wider cultural change toward more sustainable lifestyles.

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