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The European Food Challenge:

how can we move towards Healthy Sustainable Diets?

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Origins of CAP

- **famine and starvation in Europe in 1940s,**
- **post-war rationing retained in UK to feed Germany,**
- **first aim of European agricultural policy was to ensure that this never recurred.**

CAP – the essentials

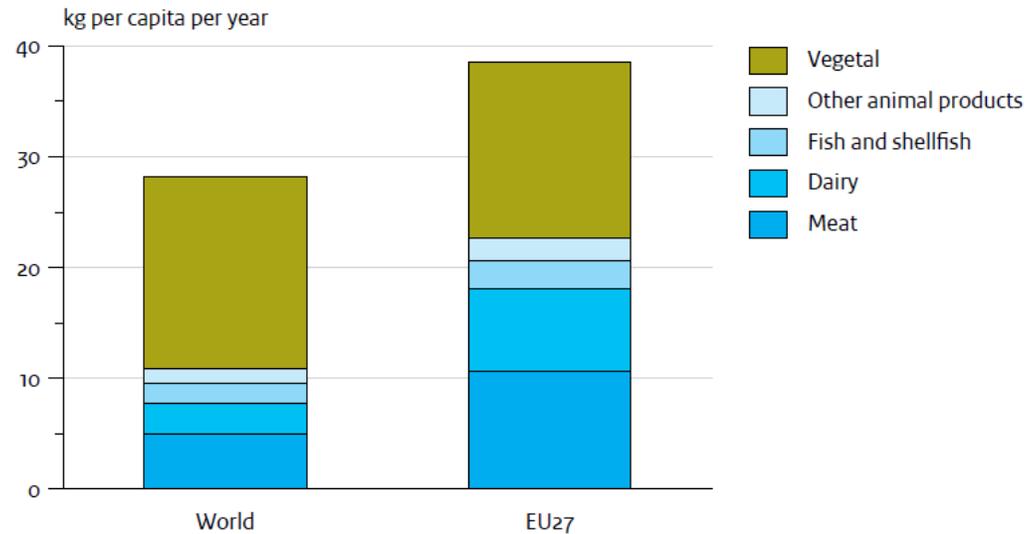
- designed to protect the rural economy, and to ensure food self-sufficiency,
- based on support to the production of certain commodities,
- in 20 years led to “beef mountains”, “milk lakes”, “butter mountains”, etc.,
- CAP responses included milk quotas, free butter for hospitals (!), etc.,

CAP and beef

- massive subsidy (“over 90% of income”),
- massive market developed for “cheap” beef,
- diverts grain production to animal food,
- results in massive grain and soya imports from developing countries,
- large quantities of mass-produced home-produced and imported beef,
- cheap burgers full of saturated fat, and
- high incidence and death rate from CHD throughout EU.

The Protein Dietary Marker

Figure 3.1
Protein supply, 2007



Source: FAO (2010)

EU per-capita consumption of proteins from animal food products is more than double the world's average.

CAP, fruit and vegetables



CAP, fruit and vegetables

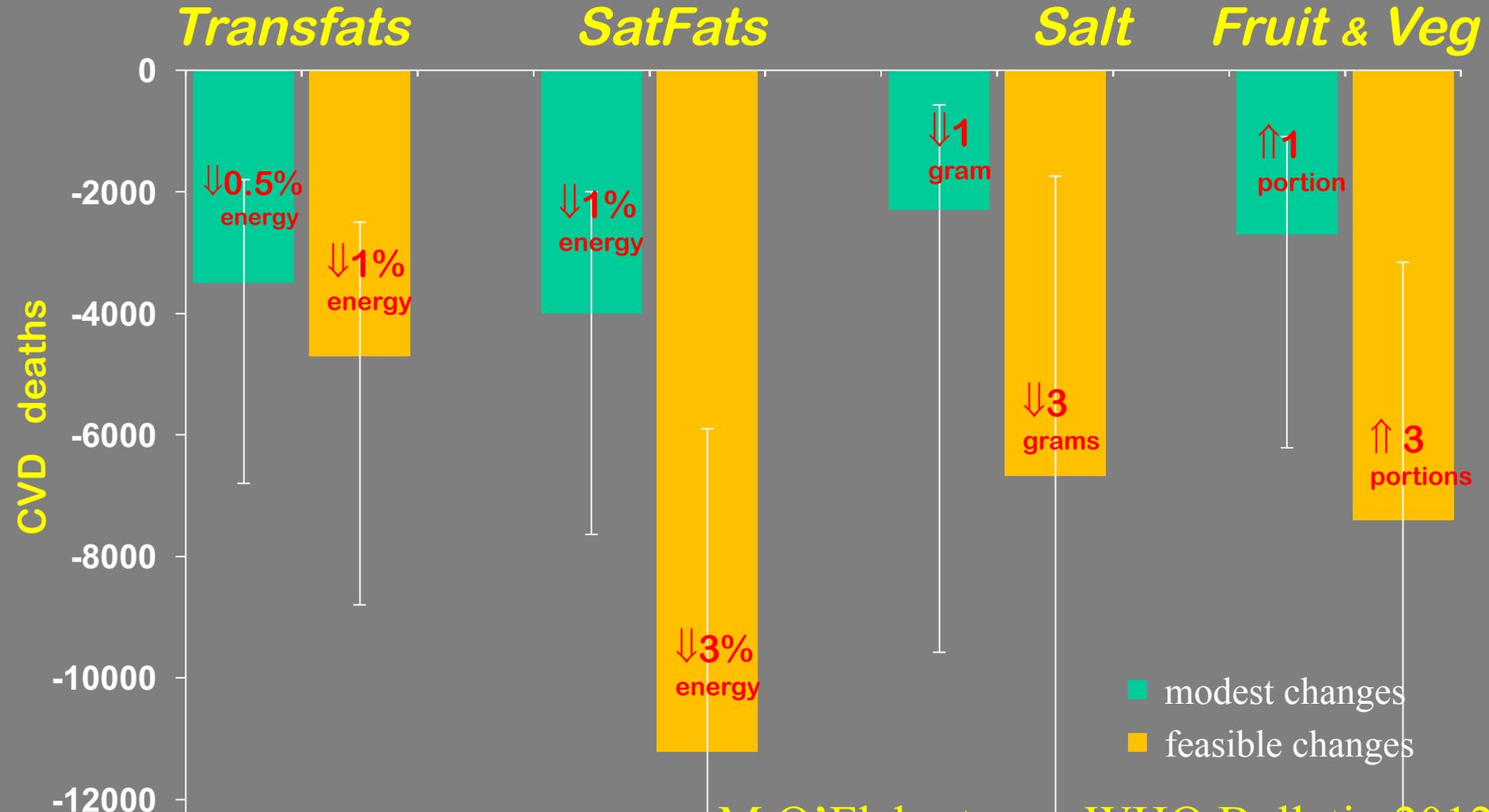
- no subsidy until recently , but destruction of cheap production to maintain high price,
- but can now be included within “whole farm payment” scheme,
- considerable under-production in relation to need, thus there is
- insufficient EU production to support “5 a day” if there were 100% take-up in UK alone!

Within EU the CAP has caused

- over-consumption of saturated fat-rich beef,
- over-consumption of saturated fat-rich dairy products,
- consumption of saturated fat-rich cakes, pies, pastries, etc.,
- under-consumption of fruit, vegetables and cereals,
- under-consumption of vegetable protein products containing “healthy” fats,
- overproduction of high tar tobacco (exported to developing countries), and
- high incidence and death rate from CVDs and cancers, both in EU and beyond.

CVD mortality reductions with different UK food policy options

UK 2006 baseline: 94,675 CHD deaths & 55,245 stroke deaths



M O'Flaherty et al WHO Bulletin 2012

The Coming of the Sustainability Agenda: Kyoto

- farming contributes 25% + of greenhouse gases worldwide (Kyoto);
- “cows” (i.e. beef and dairy) contribute up to 19% (= to all transport!);
- accordingly, reduction in both beef and dairy farming could have both health and environmental benefits.

More recent data

- Financial Times claims that farming releases over 30% of UK global warming gases;
- Other recent estimates indicate that in Western Europe (with very intensive farming), farming contributes 40% of all global warming gases.



Food System Sustainability: the issues

- Greenhouse gas emissions (mainly methane and nitrous oxide);
- Animal-origin protein versus plant-origin protein;
- Energy use;
- Water, and eutrophication;
- Land use;
- Soil quality and erosion;
- Agricultural and marine biodiversity;
- Food waste;
- Food packaging.

The features of sustainable healthy diets

- Low environmental impact;
- Contribute to food and nutrition security for present and future generations;
- High quality nutrition, to avoid all forms of malnutrition;
- Essentially plant-based diets, based on vegetables, pulses, fruit, whole grain cereals;
- Much reduced content of meat and meat products, and of other animal-origin foods (e.g. dairy);
- Include sustainably-sourced fish;
- Trans fats, and foods with high content of saturated fats, sugar or salt are to be avoided.

How to make progress towards sustainable healthy diets?

- Ambitious food strategies need to be developed at EU level and in each European country;
- Such strategies (and those that exist) must be translated into policies which are implemented rigorously;
- All sectors of society and all levels of the food chain must be consulted and involved in these changes;
- Very many stakeholders and agendas are involved; therefore much need to coordinating public health leadership;
- Accountability networks, with well structured monitoring and evaluation, are essential;
- Research community must work to fill in our knowledge gaps;
- Public health benefits may rapidly become evident; sustainability benefits will take longer to accrue.

An agenda for the EU and nation states

Each governmental body should each establish a statutory Sustainable Nutrition Task Force, the responsibilities of which might include:

- Identification of essential key features of a healthy and sustainable food system;
- Formulation and recommendation of a strategic plan for moving from current food systems towards healthy and sustainable alternatives, including by adopting a multi-disciplinary approach to food and nutrition;
- planning and recommending a programme for implementation of the strategy for sustainable and healthy food systems;
- monitoring progress towards implementation of such policies;
- supervision the evaluation of outcomes in relation to both healthy nutrition and sustainability.

EU and WHO Regional Office: Further requirements

- The EU must reform the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), taking account of the principles already outlined, ideally replacing it by a Common Food Policy, with policies from farm field and from the oceans to the dining table fork.
- The WHO Regional Office could take a lead in development of appropriate sustainable dietary guidelines, and of accountability systems, to enable commitments to be tracked.

A new European food research agenda

Food research has hitherto been splintered into many domains with minimal inter-connections between them, e.g. nutrition, food science, sustainability, agriculture, economics, social science, etc.

What is now required is a completely new food research infrastructure, devoted to the support, facilitation, and funding of multi-disciplinary aspects of food science, involving scientists with all relevant backgrounds in both natural and social sciences.

In this way, multi-disciplinary research on relevant topics “from field to fork” might at last become possible.



European Commission, 18th November 2010: “The Reform of the CAP towards 2020”

“Creating the conditions for easy access to healthy, sustainable and nutritious diet has clear public health benefits as diet is one of the major modifiable risk factor for chronic non-communicable diseases (obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer). The number of overweight children increases by 1.2 million per year and (with increase in child obesity 400,000 per year) in the EU. From a public health perspective, access to nutritious-effective food remains insufficient for some groups of EU citizens (e.g. the most deprived), availability of local and directly marketed food stuffs is limited, and acceptability is largely influenced by mass media which is biased towards unhealthy food stuffs (soft drinks, highly processed foods). Finally, there are concerns as regards other qualities of the food, which include the ethical factors related to production and the way animals are treated.”

Commissioner Cioloş:

“The Common Agriculture Policy has a clear contribution to health policies, providing safe and diverse food, at affordable prices for consumers and in sufficient quantity, promoting a balanced nutrition, based on quality products. But we can do more to create synergies between agriculture, education and health, to ensure that European policies address the challenges of diet related chronic diseases.”

EPHAC Policy Debate Public Health’s role in the CAP, European Parliament , June 16th 2011

3.5. Addressing citizens' concerns regarding sustainable agricultural production, including health, nutrition, food waste and animal welfare:

The CAP is one of the EU policies responding to societal expectations regarding food, in particular concerning food safety, food quality, environmental and animal welfare standards. Farmers are the real gatekeepers of food production systems; as such the contribution they can give to a sustainable food chain is crucial.

What else might be done internationally?

The International Society for the Study of Obesity (World Obesity) have published a draft convention document in May 2014:

“Recommendations towards a Global Convention to protect and promote healthy diets”.

So the Bottom Line is:

That over the next 2-3 decades, there must be a major change in diets across the world, such that:

protein must be provided mainly from vegetable sources (pulses, etc.), with minimal protein from mammalian animal sources.

Thank you
for listening
to me!

Any questions?