



System Innovation for Sustainability 3

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The availability of healthy food for all is a basic human need. Yet, primarily due to higher food prices, the overall number of undernourished people in the world increased from 923 million in 2007 to 963 million in 2008 -- the vast majority of whom live in developing countries. Experts estimate that close to half of the human impact on the environment is directly or indirectly related to food production and consumption. Food production, distribution, consumption and disposal are important in terms of land and resource use, pollution and emissions, biodiversity and landscape design. Also of key importance are health issues and issues surrounding the satisfaction of citizens' basic needs: more than 200 million adults in the European Union are overweight or even obese due to unhealthy diets and too little exercise. Sustainability issues are now clearly on the agenda for food producers and market actors, politicians and regulators, as well as being increasingly important in the decisions consumers make about food. A large number and variety of efforts to stimulate sustainability have been instigated and numerous studies, research programmes and publications have addressed such issues. Agri-food issues have also been prominent in the evolving definition of what sustainability means. This book focuses largely on providing answers to the question of how food production and consumption systems can stay within the limits of the carrying capacity of our natural environment. But it also considers the challenges of food security and nutrition in the context of sustainability and a growing world population. The book first analyses the state of the art in sustainable agriculture and food production in Europe. Eleven case studies follow, examining issues such as food policy, greening mainstream agricultural systems, organic farming, farmers' markets, sustainable food networks, eco-labelling, consumer behaviour, slow food and fair trade. Finally, a concluding chapter summarises what has been learned by the 60-plus experts active in the SCORE! food project. In brief: bottom-up and top-down processes have to be linked, industrialised nations must reduce their meat consumption, and agriculture should become a multifunctional sustainable system not only producing food but also delivering other services such as energy and material production, CO₂ storage and recreation -- which would have the added benefit of improving farmers' socioeconomic situations.

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