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## Sustainable food, uncomfortable choices

‘Every time I go grocery shopping, I feel a sense of fear and paralysis. Suppose I want to buy carrots: how hard can that be? I want to buy organic carrots because I know organic is better for the soil and our health. But because of strict EU regulations for organic food, the carrots are in a plastic bag. I want to reduce my use of plastic and the non-organic carrots are sold without packaging. Moreover, the non-organic carrots are locally grown, and the organic ones are imported. I try to support the local food system and economy. And then there’s the price: the organic carrots are slightly more expensive. So what is the right decision? How can we make good decisions when the food system is so complex and contradictory? How can we organize our food systems so that we stay within planetary boundaries? How do we make sustainable food choices easier? This is a social and political issue that demands both social and political responses.

We need better, more equitable food governance systems. This demands more collective and collaborative models. We need to move away from placing responsibility on the individual and move towards systemic solutions, particularly when the main driver for this type of change is consumption. An emphasis on people buying their way to sustainability gives the wealthy a bigger say in the matter. This is incompatible with an equitable future for food. My work focuses on how we can design new governance processes to ensure that those most affected by food inequality are heard and given priority. Above all, if we are serious about keeping within the safe and just operating space of our planet, we’ll have to get comfortable with the uncomfortable.’

*Jessica Duncan, Associate Professor in the Politics of Food Systems Transformations*