Abstract

Advancing Food Consumer Science to Facilitate Health and Sustainability Transitions: Bridging Complexity, Collaboration, and Ensuring FAIR Data

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Abstract: The nutritional quality of our diet depends on a number of repeated choices we make throughout the day. Understanding consumer behaviour in its full complexity and real-life context is essential for ensuring a sustainable food system that provides nutritious diets to nearly 10 billion people by 2050. Food consumer science, a multidisciplinary field, aims to comprehend how consumers engage with, desire, obtain, utilise, and dispose of food to meet their physiological, psychological, and social needs. However, the field’s fragmented nature and narrow focus on isolated product choices have hindered progress in understanding food consumption patterns and their relationships to lifestyles. To address these challenges, fostering greater connectivity and collaboration among scientists from diverse disciplines and regions is crucial. This presentation explores data proliferation and system thinking’s potential for significant advancements in the field. While the incorporation of technologies like neuroimaging, physiological measures, virtual reality, and machine learning holds promise, the complexity of the field and the lack of integration present legitimate concerns and obstacles. This presentation highlights food consumer science’s indispensable role in health and sustainability transitions, emphasising the importance of ensuring that the data we produce are Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR). It showcases approaches to improve data sharing in consumer science, demonstrating progress in harmonising measures, ensuring cross-cultural comparability, and addressing biases in data collection and analysis. Furthermore, we explore the opportunities and challenges associated with establishing research infrastructure in food consumer science, specifically highlighting the EU Horizon 2020-project COMFOCUS as a starting point.

Keywords: research infrastructure; food consumer science; FAIR data; consumer behaviour

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