

Q&A - The unanswered questions

[Symposium: Facilitating healthier and more sustainable food choices. Complementary approaches to behaviour change. \(sli.do\)](#)

Dr Michiel De Bauw (Colruyt Group & KU Leuven)

1. **I am confused on additional specifics such as a BIO label creating bonus for the ecoscore. When a product is organic for it doesn't mean it is more sustainable?**
 - A. I agree that organic products are not per se more environmentally friendly. An ideal scoring system would be sufficiently granular to capture those benefits as primary data, if any, and hence avoid double counting. As users of the Eco-Score, we depend on the French methodology and therefore have to follow their guidelines. Earlier this year, the French government's scientific committee gave the same advice, i.e., to integrate such weighting factors into the original LCA score.

Dr Emma Garnett (Oxford University)

1. **“Did you look at the long term impact i.e. did participants become desensitised to the nudge over the 9 weeks and realise meat was further away”**
 - A. Important question! In our study, we alternated meal order weekly (which I discussed at the symposium) and then monthly (which I didn't have time to discuss). We found the same effect on meal selections with both time intervals.

[\(PDF\) Order of meals at the counter and distance between options affect student cafeteria vegetarian sales \(researchgate.net\)](#)

2. **“Fascinating studies, Emma. How do you think Brexit and new FTA agreements with Australia would affect taxes on meat and thus its consumption in the UK?”**
 - A. Great question, unfortunately, I have no idea! The free trade deals and any reforms of taxes or subsidies will be down to national government policy choices which are hard to predict. [Previous evidence from Chatham House](#) and others has found that subsidy removal is much more acceptable to the public than introducing taxes (although they have a similar effect).

"However, there was a general perception that taxation would be effective as the public responds to prices. Removal of subsidies to the meat industry, which was understood to have the same outcome as price increases on individual products, was similarly believed to be effective, although reactions to this measure were more positive. There was a surprise that the industry received subsidies, directly or indirectly, in the context of free market economies."

Dr Betty Chang (EUFIC)

1. How confident are you that the self-reporting in the study is reflective of actual behaviours (rather than what they want their behaviour to be)

- A. There is always a possibility that self-reporting will be more favourable than actual behaviour. However, what is interesting about our results is that we find the pattern of self-reporting to differ depending on the type of information people receive and how engaged they are with healthy and/or sustainable eating, suggesting that different people react differently to different types of information. We would not expect to see such effects if only self-reporting biases were at play.

2. How do you address the potential recruitment bias that participants who fulfilled the survey are consumers who already consider sustainability & health?

- A. Across both our studies, about 45-49% of participants reported following a healthy diet, and around 35-36% of participants reported following a sustainable diet, meaning that at least half of the participants do not consider themselves as following a healthy and/or sustainable diet.

3. Did you try to investigate a graded label including both nutritional and environmental information, instead of presenting consumers with two distinguished labels?

- A. No, we did not combine both nutrition and environmental information in one label

4. Labels seem to be more effective on consumers who consider health and sustainability, how do we assure that these interventions don't widen health inequalities?

- A. This can be done in two ways:
1. By increasing interventions that are at least as effective for those who don't consider health and sustainability as for those that do. For example, in Emma Garnett's talk, she showed that increasing the availability of vegetarian meals influenced those who were least vegetarian to buy more vegetarian meals than other demographics (although all demographics bought more vegetarian meals when availability was increased). Similarly, increasing the availability of healthy options increases the selection of such options across different socioeconomic groups: [Is altering the availability of healthier vs. less-healthy options effective across socioeconomic groups? A mega-analysis | International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity | Full Text \(biomedcentral.com\)](#)
 2. By increasing interventions that remove practical barriers to people making healthy and sustainable choices. For example, providing people with fruit and vegetables at a nominal price through food banks, or for free has been shown to increase their uptake amongst socially disadvantaged groups. [Impact of fruits and vegetables vouchers on food insecurity in disadvantaged families from a Paris suburb | SpringerLink](#)
[The impact of providing fruits and vegetables to socially disadvantaged men: Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition: Vol 14, No 4 \(tandfonline.com\)](#)

[Improving the dietary quality of food parcels leads to improved dietary intake in Dutch food bank recipients—effects of a randomized controlled trial | SpringerLink](#)

5. Interesting presentation. How were participants recruited? Is this study published?

A. Thanks! The participants were recruited by a market agency. We're currently writing up the research for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

6. Do you think people who make healthy & sustainable food choices still go to the supermarket? Or prefer local producers/farmers? Without packaging.... (edited)

A. Making healthy and sustainable food choices is not necessarily incompatible with going to the supermarket. Some research indicates that longer supply chains can have a lower environmental impact than shorter chains [Energies | Free Full-Text | Are Short Food Supply Chains More Environmentally Sustainable than Long Chains? A Life Cycle Assessment \(LCA\) of the Eco-Efficiency of Food Chains in Selected EU Countries \(mdpi.com\)](#), <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/15/4004>.

7. Very interesting study! What are the next steps? Do you plan on using it to feed the discussions on Sustainability labelling at the European Commission? Thanks

A. Thank you! We have informed the European Commission of our findings, and we are writing up our results to submit to a peer-reviewed journal for publication.

8. Do you expect the changes in food choices to be long-lasting? Is there any empirical info?

A. Long-lasting changes in food choice tend to be developed when people have ongoing opportunities to perform their behaviour (in this case, making healthier/more sustainable choices), which can require that an intervention continues for a while. Some [research](#) has shown that it can take anywhere between 18 to 254 days to form a healthy habit – i.e. reaching the stage where the behaviour would be more long-lasting.

9. what is off-the shelf information in supermarket? is this the information on the shelf? but then, why is it off-the shelf?

A. Off-the-shelf information can include in-store posters and other displays that are not on the shelf (where generally the price or promotions/discounts are displayed). For example, we asked about this 'off-the-shelf' option in reference to our dietary recommendation, which would be too long to display on the shelf, but could be displayed elsewhere 'off the shelf' in the store.

10. the bar plots: in turkey, the response was always 4, why is that?

A. We have noticed here and in previous surveys that participants in Turkey seem to exhibit a positive response bias. This happens in some countries – e.g., <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167811610000728>

11. Were the people paid to be surveyed or did you use other types of motivation/engagement?

A. Our participants were paid by a recruitment agency.

12. What do you mean by "standardised label"? A common label, equal for all the food products in the market?

A. Yes, a common label that can be applied to all food products in the same way and displayed to the public, as opposed to a personalised label where individuals can choose which aspects of nutrition/environmental impact information they want to access

13. Isn't it a bit too simplistic to look at the nutrition score to judge the nutritional quality? if you eat too much of an A-product, it can become unhealthy.

A. It can be simplistic, but for the purposes of our study, we felt it was the most relevant example for informing the current debate on nutrition communication on food packaging because this type of nutritional label format is relatively widespread.

14. Interesting presentation. Thank you! I was curious how you explain to choose less vegetables with labels.

A. Great question! It may be that people are buying more pizza instead because they are also buying less meat (and therefore fewer vegetables to accompany the meat)? We will have to look into that. Otherwise, I have no idea.

15. if I understood correctly labelling and recommendations do not help to let the consumer make more sustainable options. Which other approaches could be followed?

A. The other speakers after me Michiel De Bauw and Emma Garnett gave some examples. Michiel found that a more specific recommendation about quantities of meat people should eat helped to make more sustainable choices primarily through reducing beef intake. Emma showed that placement, availability and pricing of vegetarian meals can help people choose vegetarian over meat options.

16. How comparable is the virtual shopping situation to a real shopping situation?

A. It is not completely comparable, as the price was not a factor in our virtual shopping task, whereas it is often a decisive factor in real shopping situations. However, this study allows us to better see how people might behave *with everything else being equal* (e.g., no differences in prices, layout, etc.), which is a starting point for real-life studies to build upon.