Publication Series

Policy Pathways towards 1.5-Degree Lifestyles

Research insights for transitioning towards 1.5-degrees food systems

Transformative Solution: Dietary Shifts

zoe institute for future-fit economies

1.5 degree lifestyles

Imprint

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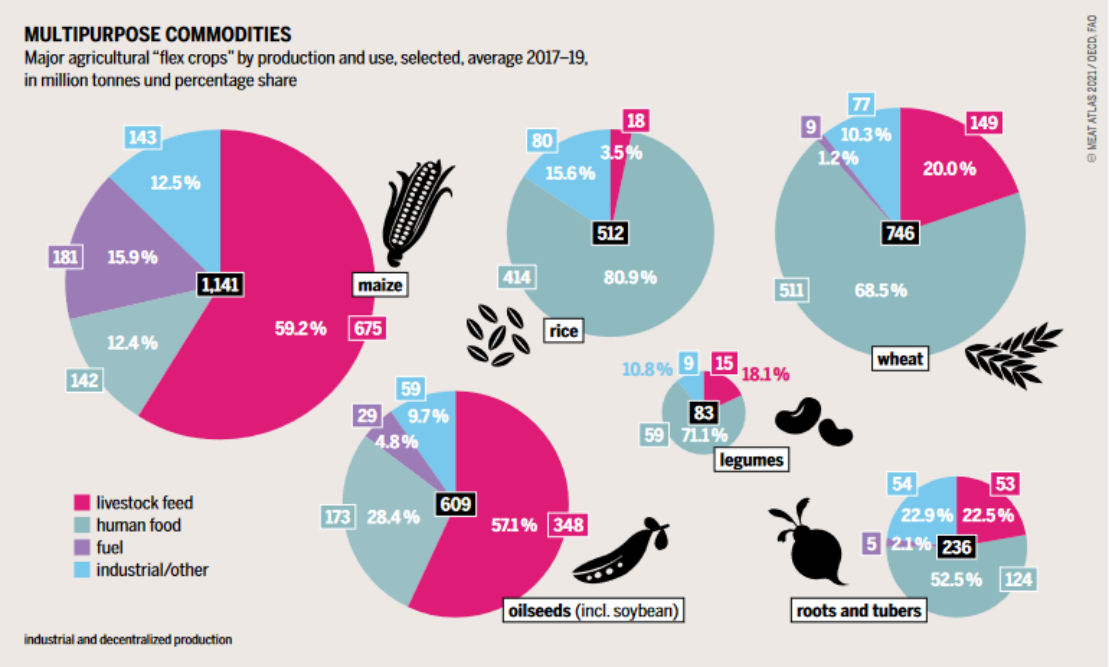
Research insights for transitioning towards 1.5-degrees food systems

Reshaping food policy for sustainable and equitable lifestyles

Dietary Shifts



Source: Heinrich Böll Foundation 2021

To stay within 1.5° degrees, consumption-based emissions should be reduced by at least 47% (75%) in the food sector by 2030 (2050) (Akenji et al. 2021). Livestock, and in particular meat and dairy industries, make up 58% of GHGs emissions from the food sector. In contrast to these high emissions, livestock only account for 18% of the global calorie intake (Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2021). To tackle climate change and environmental breakdown, plant diets bear high potential for achieving a transition of an unprecedented scope in the food system. It can be a strong contribution to achieving the gains needed by 2050 in reducing GHGs emissions and reducing reactive nitrogen to sustainable levels.

Public health improvements

Europeans consume more animal product than the nutritional recommendations of the World Health Organization (EEA 2018). This has health-related consequences such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer (EEA 2018). As such, eating less meat and dairy products has important health benefits for European citizens.

F2F has presented an integrated policy approach

Achieving mass behavioural change away from animal products cannot solely rely on individual choices and needs to be adequately supported by policies. Current policy recommendations of Farm to Fork are largely aimed at labelling of sustainable foods and financial support for plant-based products. There is a lot more room for ambitious measures to reduce production of animal products. For example, clear commitments to tackle livestock emissions are missing (EEB 2021). Ambitious measures to induce dietary shifts include means such as restricting advertising for high carbon foods or increasing taxes on animal products. Read more about policy ideas in the policy database here.

EU citizens are ready for change

Many European countries have seen a surge in the plant-based food industry. Overall, the industry grew by 49% between 2018 and 2020, with the biggest growth coming from Germany (226%) and Austria (82%) (European Commission, 2022). This points to a general readiness to change food consumption habits and openness to swap proteins with plant-based products.

Further resources

Find out more about the potential of dietary change on health and emissions reduction in Section I of the Hot or Cool Report here.

Find out more about the impact of meat and dairy production on environmental breakdown in the IPCC's 2022 Impact, Adaptation and Vulnerability report here.

Bibliography

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