

## #322: How are health and sustainability addressed in studies of public meals?

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The world is facing a number of challenges related to food consumption. Food conduces to far-reaching health effects as well as environmental impact. System changes are needed to meet a sustainable, healthy food production and consumption. Public and institutional meals play a vital role in promoting health and sustainability. In many countries public meals, in this study defined as meals taking place in institutional settings, constitutes a substantial part of food consumption, and may exert a normative influence on peoples' food habits. The aim of this study was to exploratively review how, and if, health and sustainability are addressed in the European scientific literature dealing with public meals. Of >3000 papers, 20 were found to satisfy the criteria and included in the review. The results showed that schools and hospitals are the most dominant arenas where both health and sustainability have been addressed. Three different approaches in combining health and sustainability. In the first "Health as embracing sustainability" health is the point of departure and sustainability is included as part of health. This is emphasized in relation to health promotion initiatives and how these could also be more sustainable, claiming that health should embrace both aspects. In the second, "Sustainability as embracing health" sustainability is in focus and health is seen as part of sustainability. This was for example illustrated when focusing on sustainable food procurement which is then also motivated by better nutrition in terms of knowing where the food comes from and how it is produced. Last, for "Health and sustainability as separate concepts" the link between health and sustainability was unspecified or undefined. This could be exemplified by the stated, but not inter linked or combined, role of the school meal to tackle societal challenges related to health and sustainability. In general, a clear motivation for addressing both health and sustainability is most often missing. This indicates a need for more research within all public meal arenas regarding issues of health and sustainability, for example in order to provide a more comprehensive foundation for decision-making.

### **Keywords**

health; sustainability; public meals; Europe

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