

THE CRUCIAL CHALLENGE OF FOOD SUSTAINABILITY: ENSURING HUMANITY'S SURVIVAL

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VET4FOOD
VET Training for Food Sustainability

As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, food sustainability stands out as one of the most pressing challenges we face. The way we produce, consume, and dispose of food not only affects the health of our planet but also the well-being and survival of future generations. With the global population expected to reach 10 billion by 2050, ensuring a sustainable food system is not just an environmental concern but a fundamental necessity for human survival.

The Stakes of Food Sustainability

Food sustainability involves creating a balance where food production meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. The stakes are high

Environmental Impact: Agriculture is a significant driver of environmental degradation, contributing to deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and soil erosion. These activities exacerbate climate change, which in turn affects agricultural productivity.

Resource Depletion: The agricultural sector consumes approximately 70% of the world's freshwater. Unsustainable practices and climate change-induced droughts jeopardize this precious resource, threatening food security.

Food Waste: Nearly one-third of all food produced globally is wasted, translating into a massive waste of water, energy, and labor. Reducing food waste is crucial for conserving resources and feeding a growing population.



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Human Health: Unsustainable food systems contribute to a range of health issues, from malnutrition to obesity. Poor dietary choices, driven by unsustainable practices, have a direct impact on public health.



In this scenario gastronomy plays a vital social role in connecting urban consumers with rural producers, fostering a deeper understanding of food origins and the importance of sustainable practices. This connection is cultivated through different initiatives and programs.

One of this is the **EU's Farm to Fork** strategy, a comprehensive approach to creating a sustainable food system that addresses environmental, social, and economic challenges. By fostering sustainable practices in food production and consumption, and by educating future chefs and hospitality professionals, the strategy aims to build a resilient food system that supports both human and planetary health.

The European Farm to Fork strategy promotes various initiatives one of which is Public Awareness and Education to adopt campaigns to educate the people about sustainable food choices and the environmental impact of their dietary habits and suggest revising school curricula to include sustainability and food education.

Among the activities that the EU is putting in place for the turn toward sustainability, professional cooking and tourism schools play a crucial role in advancing the Farm to Fork strategy by training the next generation of chefs and hospitality professionals. They can incorporate sustainable practices into their curricula and foster a culture of sustainability within the food and tourism sectors.



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In some countries many schools are changing their curricula to train staff prepared in food sustainability to implement **strategies for sustainable menu planning** like:

- Local and Seasonal Sourcing:
 - Training students to prioritize local and seasonal ingredients, reducing the carbon footprint associated with food transportation.
 - Encouraging partnerships with local farmers and producers.
- Plant-Based Menus:
 - Emphasizing the importance of plant-based diets in reducing environmental impact.
 - Teaching innovative culinary techniques to create appealing and nutritious plant-based dishes.
- Minimizing Food Waste:
 - Incorporating waste reduction techniques into cooking classes, such as nose-to-tail cooking and utilizing food scraps.
 - Implementing portion control and efficient inventory management practices.



- Energy and Water Efficiency:
 - Teaching the use of energy-efficient kitchen appliances and water-saving practices.
 - Encouraging sustainable kitchen design that optimizes resource use.
- Sustainable Seafood:
 - Educating students on the importance of choosing sustainably sourced seafood and recognizing certification labels.
 - Promoting lesser-known, sustainable fish species to reduce pressure on popular, overfished stocks.



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Food Sustainability as a Job Opportunity

It should not be overlooked that the drive towards food sustainability opens up **numerous job opportunities** in various sectors, including food and wine, and sustainable tourism. In particular the sustainable food and wine industry: the growing demand for sustainable food and wine practices creates opportunities for chefs, farmers, winemakers, and entrepreneurs. Jobs in organic farming, sustainable winemaking, and eco-friendly restaurants are on the rise. This trend not only benefits the environment but also attracts consumers willing to pay a premium for sustainably produced products.

Also **sustainable tourism** emphasizes low-impact travel and experiences that benefit local communities and environments. This sector includes farm stays, eco-friendly resorts, and food tours that highlight sustainable practices. Sustainable tourism creates jobs in hospitality, education, and conservation, promoting a holistic approach to travel that respects and preserves local cultures and ecosystems.

Addressing **the challenge of food sustainability is crucial** for ensuring humanity's survival. By rethinking menus and adopting sustainable practices, the food industry can significantly reduce its environmental impact. Gastronomy's social role in bridging urban and rural communities, along with the economic opportunities in sustainable food and wine and tourism sectors, highlights the multifaceted benefits of embracing sustainability. Together, **we can build a resilient food system** that nurtures both people and the planet.

