

Food Literacy, Foodiness, and Sustainable Dietary Behaviour: A Case Study of Canadian Youth

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Abstract:

While there is significant potential to influence the sustainability of agri-food systems through consumer demand behaviour, there is a knowledge deficit around how the 'foodie' construct associates with sustainable dietary behaviours. While foodies may have greater general food literacy and social engagement with food ('agents of change' hypothesis), their choices are also strongly influenced by the pleasure they derive from food, which may trump consideration of the environmental and societal impacts of their food behaviour ('destroyer of worlds' hypothesis). We assess these competing ideas through an online survey. We determined foodie status using the Foodie Index, and measured the saliency of sustainability when making food choices, concern about food sustainability and protecting the environment, pro-environmental values, and sustainable food literacy in a sample of 617 Canadian youth (18-25 yrs.). We also determined their action stage for 15 behaviours associated with environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable dietary behaviour using the first four stages of the Transtheoretical Model of behavioural change. Foodies were more likely than non-foodies to be in the action stage (I am already doing this) for eight behaviours, and non-foodies were more likely than foodies to be in the precontemplation stage (I am not doing this and I am not willing to) for 14 of the 15 behaviours. Foodiness scores positively associated with the saliency of sustainability when making food choices, concern about both food sustainability concern and protecting the environment, pro-environmental values, and sustainable food literacy. We discuss these findings in the context of educational opportunities and other initiatives to promote more sustainable dietary practices amongst youth.