

Editorial

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Special Issue on FCEM – International Web Conference on Food Choice & Eating Motivation: Message from the editor

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The journal *Open Agriculture* was associated with the Organization of the International Web Conference on Food Choice & Eating Motivation, which took place online on the 19th–20th May 2022, organised by the Polytechnic University of Viseu and the CERNAS-IPV Research Centre on Natural Resources, Environment and Society.

The **Special Issue on FCEM – International Web Conference on Food Choice & Eating Motivation** was designed to invite the authors of works accepted for presentation at the conference to publish their complete and original works. The topics covered by the conferences and the Special Issue were as follows: • Eating Motivations • Determinants of Food Choice • Trends in Food Science • Food Properties • Sensory Science • Gastronomy • Diet and Nutrition • Bioactive Ingredients • Functional Foods and Nutraceuticals • Food Safety Concerns • Food Security and Sustainability.

It is unquestionable that there is a huge challenge related to the necessity to produce sufficient food to feed the growing world population. At the same time, climate change and global warming pose additional challenges on how to achieve food security while producing foods that are more sustainable and bring less pressure to the environment and the ecosystems. This has led the scientific community, industrial, political organisations, and other intervening bodies in the food supply chain to find ways to produce foods in more efficient ways and obtain foods with a higher density of nutrients and other compounds with biological activity. Presently, the consumer's awareness

of environmental issues is one strong driver of food choice, leading to preferences for organic foods, foods with lower carbon footprint, and clean labels.

Apart from environmental conscientiousness, modern consumers are also highly focused on buying and consuming foods that, besides nutritional value, have recognised positive effects on the human body, the so-called functional foods or nutraceuticals. The concepts of eating for well-being, eating for better health status and eating as an ally to cure illnesses have become important motivators for food choice. In response to this, the food industry has been developing foods with the collaboration of academics that can respond to these consumer demands.

The minimisation of the environmental impact derived from the residues of the food industry has been shifting to the valorisation of the by-products and residues' components by extracting valuable nutritional components or bioactive compounds that are then incorporated into other food products, enhancing their biological value. This trend has high impacts on the economic level as well as the social and environmental levels. While significantly reducing the amount of waste that needs to be discarded, valuable sub-products and ingredients are obtained.

The focus on the consumer as a pivotal actor in the food system is a trend that must be kept in the future to drive the other actors of the food system to cope with strategies of development that value the food chain and the consumer. On the other hand, the role of the consumer must be driven by ethical issues, sustainable options, and responsible food purchase, consumption, and discard. For this to be viable, the consumer must be duly informed so as to make conscious and responsible food choices.

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