

Action Brief for and with Consumers

As a key driver of decision-making in food environments, consumer choices shape demand and signal what is valued in the marketplace. With their collective power, consumers are uniquely positioned to drive food system transformation. Still, their choices are constrained by other food system actors and factors, such as corporate influence, aggressive marketing, and policies that prioritise profits over well-being. Unlocking the full collective power of consumer organisations requires systemic change.

This Action Brief lays out the calls to action and the actions to stop for consumers and community organisations towards healthier, more sustainable, and just food systems. It also calls on other sectors to support them in their efforts.

This brief was developed by the CfA members as a reflection on their contributions to an urgent transition to healthy, safe, and just food systems. As a community we are committed to regularly updating this brief in line with our commitments, contribution and ambitions.

ACT4FOOD



SECTION 01

Calls to Action

What this community must start, strengthen, or transform to drive change from within.

01.1

Champion systemic change and confront power inequities.

Emphasise that lasting systemic change requires governments, businesses, financial institutions, and affluent communities to take responsibility for reshaping policies, subsidies, and corporate practices. While consumers should move towards healthier, sustainable diets, this shift becomes possible only when systemic reforms make such choices affordable, accessible, and appealing. As consumers and citizens, it is on us to expose the powerful interests that influence policy and create outcomes that are unjust, unhealthy, or unsustainable.

01.3

Build new marketplace models, connecting consumers and farmers in local food networks.

Take collective action to connect frontline food system actors while advancing fairer outcomes for all. Pilot, improve, and scale context-appropriate approaches that link local farmers and consumers, including consumer cooperatives, wet markets, digital platforms, community food hubs, and community-supported agriculture. Ensure these models respond to the needs and preferences of marginalised groups and youth.

01.2

Forge powerful partnerships for greater impact.

Build bridges with a wider range of food systems actors to shape the urgent transition to healthy and sustainable diets for all. This includes partnering with local farmers, community centres, healthcare professionals, and influential media voices to promote positive narratives through trusted, locally relevant channels, ensuring marginalised groups and youth are included. Through coalition-building and community platforms, we can co-create solutions that link nutrition, climate, and biodiversity, driving cross-sector and intergenerational action.

01.4

Strengthen traditional food systems and indigenous knowledge.

Protect, promote, and revitalise traditional food systems that have sustained communities for generations. Document and share indigenous food knowledge, support traditional food producers and integrate ancestral dietary practices with modern nutrition science. This includes advocating for policies that protect indigenous seeds, land, and traditional farming methods.

01.5

Bring grassroots voices into food systems governance.

Equip and empower consumers to engage in political processes, from elections to policy consultations and inclusive decision-making. Where possible given institutional and political environments, amplify and institutionalise consumers' voices, such as youth leadership (and others), in food-policy councils and citizens' assemblies, with built-in accountability mechanisms. Where formal opportunities are more limited, mobilise popular movements.

01.7

Push for accountability and transparency from governments and businesses.

Advocate, with public support, for social and environmental goal-setting and tracking that is publicly set, transparently tracked, and reported on. Push for legal mandates to achieve these goals, supported by transparent, and inclusive governance to ensure that commitments are independently monitored and implemented. Push for rigorous enforcement of food-safety standards and marketing regulations and penalties that protect consumers, especially children, from manipulative and misleading promotion of unhealthy foods.

01.9

Tackle misinformation and tailor communication to diverse communities.

Counter misinformation and the resulting confusion on complex topics such as plant-rich diets, processed foods, and local food economies. Tailor communication to different communities, both in terms of content, – addressing culturally-appropriate diets and differentiated responsibilities for dietary shift, – and in the approach, partnering with local media, fact-checking organisations, youth, and trusted voices to reach and engage a wider audience.

01.6

Promote policy actions that advance access to the Planetary Health Diet (PHD).

Advocate for inclusive and participatory policies and regulations, from local to global, that ensure access to healthy, sustainable diets, and prioritise those most vulnerable to malnutrition. Ground these actions in the recognition of the human right to adequate food. This fundamental right guarantees every person access to food in sufficient quantity and quality for a dignified and healthy life, and an essential guarantee for the exercise of other rights.

01.8

Pressure and engage with businesses to make healthy and sustainable diets the easy choice for consumers.

Mobilise and signal consumer preferences for minimally processed¹, healthy, and affordable foods, while pressing and engaging with companies to shift product portfolios, reformulation, marketing, labelling, pricing, and availability. Monitor and call out irresponsible practices, and identify areas that require the creation or enforcement of regulation.

01.10

Increase consumer awareness and education on the benefits of dietary shifts.

Build public evidence-based understanding of the nutritional, environmental, and social benefits of healthy and sustainable diets for all through clear and accessible communication campaigns and educational programmes (in schools, community centres, etc.). These efforts should integrate food literacy and translate science into insights on the concrete issues that matter most for consumers.

¹ Food processing was extensively considered in the 2025 EAT-Lancet Commission, which recommends that most foods should be consumed whole, unprocessed, or minimally processed. The Commission recognises the many adverse health outcomes associated with ultra-processed foods that are high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat, designed to foster overconsumption over public health. It recognises, however, that current classification systems may struggle to capture those forms of processing and packing that can increase the availability and shelf life of healthy foods with important nutritional and environmental benefits.

SECTION 02

Actions to Stop or Do Differently

Actions currently undertaken by our community that hinder progress towards healthier, more sustainable, and more just food systems and should be stopped or done differently.

02.1

Stop siloed, top-down approaches to decision-making.

Focus instead on inclusive grassroots efforts that connect farmers, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and consumers across socio-economic groups. Ensure policies reflect lived experiences, link climate, biodiversity, water, and food, and are backed by permanent, meaningful spaces for open dialogue where all voices are respected.

02.3

Stop using language and narratives that alienate or confuse consumers.

Avoid using jargon and framing dietary shifts as an elite choice. Instead, frame dietary shifts in terms of health, affordability, and everyday-life benefits. Adopt inclusive and empowering language and translations into multiple languages that connect with people and their local contexts.

02.5

Stop expanding the policy agenda and strengthen implementation, adaptation and enforcement.

Push for the adaptation, improvement, and implementation of existing policies and increase their effectiveness with better enforcement, accountability, and governance. Ensure clear timelines, continuous monitoring, and adaptation, and maintain pressure and momentum through public opinion.

02.2

Stop placing responsibility on individual consumers to lead change.

Emphasise that individual consumers cannot be expected to lead change alone, given systemic lock-ins such as entrenched power imbalances. Instead,

- highlight the responsibility of regulators, government and industry to reshape food environments making sustainable and nutritious options the easy choice, and
- organise consumer action, utilising the collective consumer agency to shift norms and push institutions to act.

02.4

Stop shying away from demanding corporate accountability, transparency, and responsibility.

Confront and push governments to make corporations recognise their global and local responsibility for unhealthy and unsustainable outcomes, mobilising accountability mechanisms for greater transparency. Also, work with corporations directly in an effort to co-create accountability and transparency measures without compromising just and sustainable outcomes.

SECTION 03

Unlocks

Asks from this community to other communities that are necessary to overcome systemic barriers to action (“lock-ins”), pointing to opportunities for collaboration.

1. POLICYMAKERS

- A. **Provide transparent, clear data and equitable access to information** to educate consumers, fight misinformation, and define who is responsible and accountable.
- B. **Leverage public food procurement** (in schools, hospitals, public canteens) to normalise and create demand for healthy and sustainable foods.
- C. **Regulate price, availability, and infrastructure** to ensure access to healthy and sustainable foods.
- D. **Regulate against the production, promotion, and marketing of unhealthy foods** (particularly for children) and **de-subsidise the import of cheap, processed foods**.
- E. **Ensure food packaging and labelling are clear to consumers.**
- F. **Recognize and support informal food systems**, including markets and street-food vendors.
- G. **Ensure corporations are held accountable** for the negative impacts of their activities on food systems.
- H. **Reduce special-interest influence on policy** through transparency and lobbying/donation limits.
- I. **Ensure meaningful representation of diverse consumer profiles.**

2. FARMERS AND FISHERS

- A. **Collaborate directly with consumer groups and civil society organisations to build coalitions and co-create solutions** that generate or maintain demand for diverse, sustainable, healthy and indigenous foods, guarantee a just transition and ensure equitable working conditions for farmers and fishers.
- B. **Promote direct-to-consumer models** to reduce dependence on intermediaries and strengthen local food markets through trustworthy, transparent practices and fair pricing.

3. FOOD RETAILERS AND MANUFACTURERS

- A. **Make healthy and sustainable choices more available, affordable and convenient than unhealthy foods**, especially for marginalised groups.
- B. **Reduce and stop the promotion of unsafe chemicals and unhealthy ultra-processed foods**, particularly processed meat and foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat.
- C. **Ensure fair pricing** throughout supply chains, especially for smallholder farmers.

- D. **Prioritise procurement from local farmers and producers.**
- E. **Be transparent in reporting**, including on market share, sustainability targets, progress in improving food healthiness, wages and working conditions.

4. SCIENCE AND ACADEMIA

- A. **Integrate local people's perspectives and needs in research design**, and co-produce studies with community members as registered co-investigators. **Communicate results in a more accessible way.**
- B. **Conduct more policy-relevant and community-engaged research in a just way**, ensuring representation from marginalised groups, recognising consumers as generators of knowledge.
- C. **Recognise local priorities** and inform research and policy development and action with relevant, credible evidence.
- D. **Engage with storytellers and journalists to improve knowledge-mobilisation efforts** and ensure the knowledge gap is bridged between consumers and science.

5. HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

- A. **Raise awareness of the importance of adopting the PHD and of ensuring food security for all.**
- B. **Shift the narrative in public-health campaigns from individual responsibility on patients to collective responsibility** and need for systemic change.

6. FINANCIAL SECTOR

- A. **Redirect agricultural financing** from industrial monocultures to diversified sustainable farming.
- B. **Provide accessible credit** for consumer cooperatives and local food enterprises.
- C. **Stop financing industrial agriculture that displaces traditional food systems.**
- D. **Support microfinance for marginalised groups**, such as women farmers, youth, and food entrepreneurs.

7. YOUTH

- A. **Organise and mobilise peers to raise the visibility of food-systems issues** through grassroots campaigns, social media, local community-level action, and policy dialogues.
- B. **Innovate new models for accountability and sustainability**, from youth-led research to entrepreneurial solutions, while pushing institutions to adopt them.

SECTION 04

Next steps

This Action Brief is a living document, developed for and with Consumers, aiming to guide collaboration and action across the sector in line with the 2025 EAT-Lancet Commission.

Consumer and community organisations are encouraged to adopt and adapt this brief to their contexts, scaling its reach and amplifying its impact by driving change from within our community, and the cross-sector conversations needed to address consumers' top priorities. Building on this valuable momentum, we can strengthen the collective impact of consumer choices and demands in shaping food systems that are healthy, sustainable, and just.

This requires mobilising leadership and inclusive approaches, championing the Action Brief at the EAT Stockholm Food Forum, and carrying its message into COP30 and beyond.

The community is called upon to continue shaping, promoting, and sharing the Action Brief's messages across their networks, collaborating to build stronger, more relevant cases for systemic change. Through diverse coalitions, consumer advocates can play a unique and pivotal role in unlocking the consumer voice to drive decision-making for healthy and sustainable diets both locally and globally.

SECTION 05

Acknowledgements

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Contributing organisations include:

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Act4Food is a collective of global youth activists demanding a seat at the table to change food for good.

Consumers International is a global membership organisation that champions consumer rights and promotes fair, safe, and sustainable markets worldwide.