Can we cut out the meat of the dish? Constructing consumer-oriented pathways towards meat substitution.

Abstract

The shift towards a more sustainable diet necessitates less reliance on foods of animal origin. This study presents data from a representative survey of Dutch consumers on their practices related to meat, meat substitution and meat reduction. The practices reflected a cultural gradient of meat substitution options running from other products of animal origin and conventional meat free meals to real vegetarian meals. To investigate feasible substitution options, a variety of meals without meat were presented using photos, which were rated by the participants in terms of attractiveness and chances that they would prepare a similar meal at home. The results demonstrated the influence of meal formats, product familiarity, cooking skills, preferences for plant-based foods and motivational orientations towards food. In particular, a lack of familiarity and skill
hampered the preparation of real vegetarian meals. Based on the findings we propose a diversified understanding of meat substitution and we specify four policy-relevant pathways for a transition towards a more plant-based diet, including an incremental change towards more health-conscious vegetarian meals, a pathway that utilizes the trend towards convenience, a pathway of reduced portion size, and practice-oriented change towards vegetarian meals.

Highlights
â–º Meat substitution necessitates understanding of cultural food practices. â–º Consumers substituting meat are likely to shift to other animal foods. â–º Lack of familiarity and skill hamper a change to real vegetarian meals. â–º Meat substitution also achieved by convenience-related trends and small portions.

Keywords
Sustainability; Consumption patterns; Meat substitution; Insects; Vegetarian diet; Food culture
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