



The Challenge

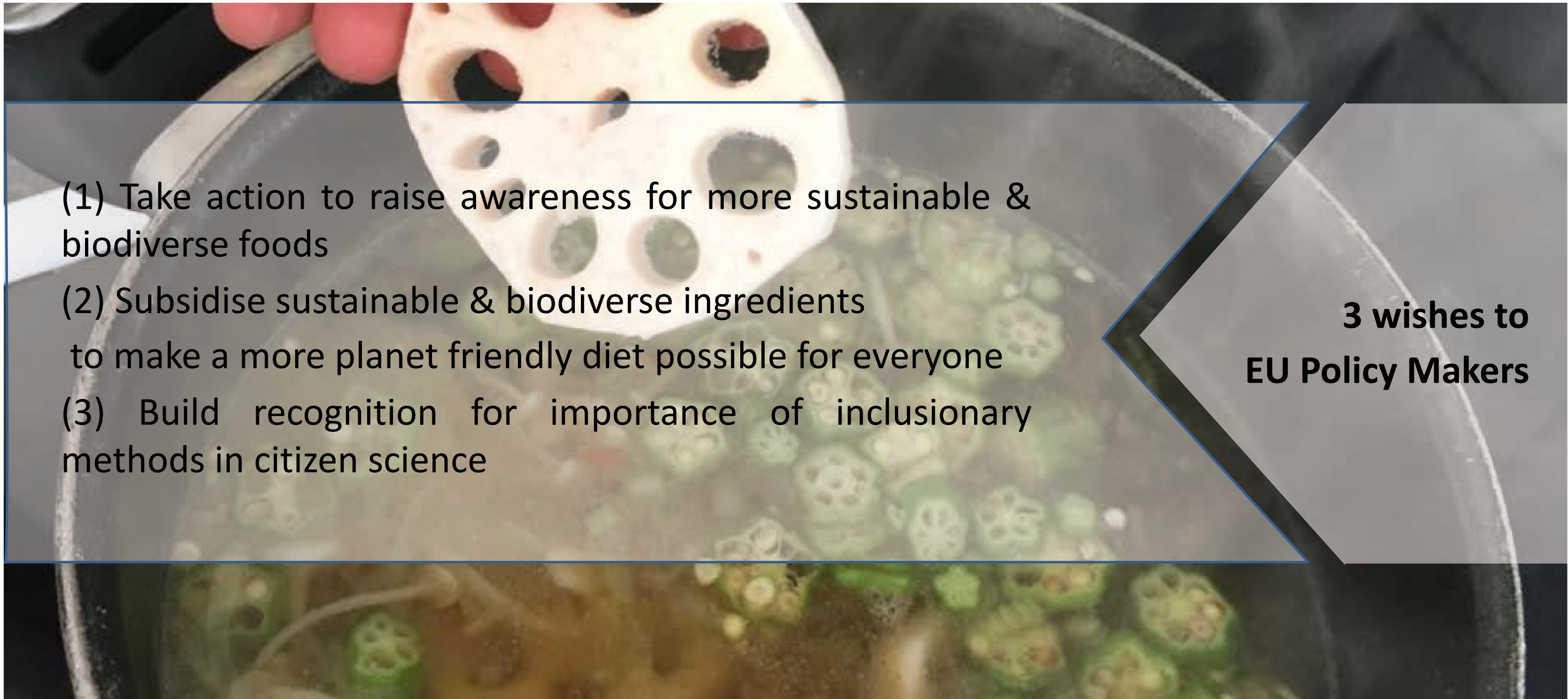
EAT Lancet (2019) tells us: *food is the single strongest lever to optimize human health and environmental sustainability on Earth*. The human food system impacts all 17 SDGs and all nine planetary boundaries; at present, it is damaging both people and planet. Actionable advice in reports such as EAT Lancet is typically generalized to ensure broad relevance. However, food practices are situated in the body, in family, social groups, culture and tradition, and are impacted by local conditions. Food system transformation must therefore be systemic; relevant to situated, everyday practice; coherent with available possibilities; able to fulfil deep-seated sociocultural, as well as nutritional needs. *ReThinking Food* uses the the WWF and Knorr ‘Future 50 Foods’ report (Shaver & Drewnowski, 2019) as a starting point to examine citizen engagement with international food and sustainability advice. To ensure benefit for both scientists and the community, we ask: *What is required for top-down reports to be effective and lead to changes in practice?* And: *How might citizens be empowered to drive both top-down and bottom-up societal change?*

Method

To determine how to connect daily food and eating practices with global sustainability agendas, we take an extreme approach to citizen science (Haklay, 2013), using participatory approaches to research through design to involve citizens in problem definition, data collection and analysis. Over two months, 35 families reflect on how the Future 50 Foods report might help them become more sustainable in their eating habits. Activities include: a pre-study survey; self-guided experiments with foods provided by the research team (the Future 50 Foods available locally); recipe swaps, photo sharing, and asynchronous discussion through a closed facebook group; online cooking classes and Q&A sessions with an award-winning chef; online community analysis and peer-review of research outputs. In parallel, over three months, we are conducting national surveys and activities, with support from the Danish national broadcaster, and regional and local press, who are running parallel themes to support informed discussion, dissemination and recruitment.

Results

To date, we find citizens to be open-minded to transforming their eating behaviors. They are willing to compromise on taste and flavor for more sustainability. However, time and cost exert very real pressures on families that can impede change; children’s willingness to experiment may also be an issue. Our study design is agile, which enables us to respond to insights as they arise. We hope to report deeper insights soon.



- (1) Take action to raise awareness for more sustainable & biodiverse foods
- (2) Subsidise sustainable & biodiverse ingredients to make a more planet friendly diet possible for everyone
- (3) Build recognition for importance of inclusionary methods in citizen science

3 wishes to
EU Policy Makers

Details

ReThinking Food unfolds over three courses:

1. *Main study*: Oct-Nov 2020, 35 families living Kolding, Denmark—22 in the city and suburbs, 12 in the surrounding countryside. These families meet the researchers, receive food boxes and have direct engagement with the researchers and chef.
2. *Free-Range*: Oct 2020-Jan 2021, unlimited participants—families or households, from across Denmark. These participants access prompts and activities through an online portal. They can participate in an online meal with other participants and their families, hosted by the researchers and chef. Supplementary media is provided by the national broadcaster.
3. *Dessert*: All interested parties come together for an online community analysis and peer-review process. The aim is to challenge, develop and confirm the researchers’ findings.

In addition to the main research questions, Parts 2. *Free-Range* and 3. *Dessert*, seek to understand: *What is needed to keep people engaged with an extended, participatory online study?* And: *How might we conduct online community-based peer-review ensuring all participants have a voice?* The aim is to advance a food-based research inquiry while expanding our methodological understanding of why so-called ‘extreme’ approaches to citizen science may bring benefit.

Conclusion

ReThinking Food foregrounds the value of situated knowledge, the expertise that arises from personal experience, and the importance of inclusion. It extends existing approaches to citizen science to be more inclusive and open. The project thus seeks to maximize the social impact of citizen science for people who may not otherwise have a voice in societal change. Eating is a personally relevant, locally situated, globally impactful everyday activity. Our research moves the conversation beyond important issues of food system transformation, to no less important concerns for personal empowerment.



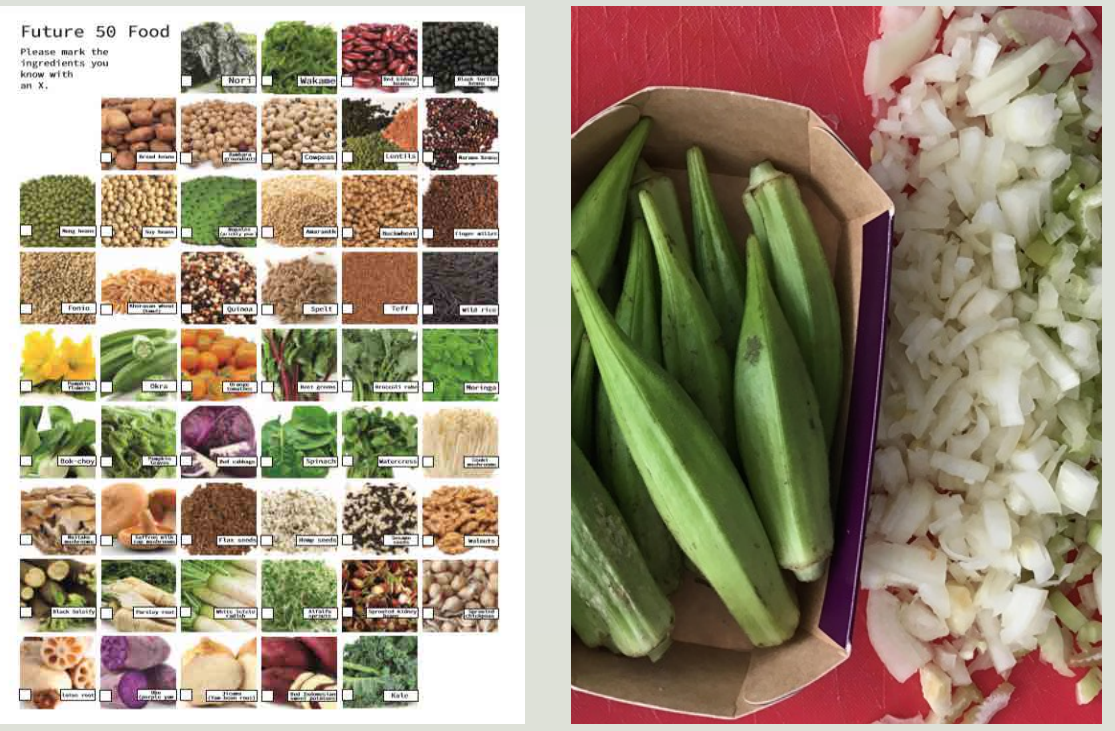
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