

BEACON

Behavioural Insights for a Circular Society

THE BEACON PROJECT

Our Network

AFFILIATION



CBS is Denmark's largest educational and research institution within business administration and economics in a wide sense. The university is committed to communicating knowledge and new ideas to tomorrow's business leaders and society in general.

FUNDING



The Novo Nordisk Foundation (NNF) aims to improve people's lives by improving health, education and developing a knowledge-based, sustainable society through grant awards. Beacon is one of the many projects funded by the NNF.

PARTNERSHIP



Together with the Office of Internationalization and Sustainability of the City of Copenhagen, we run experimental and quasi-experimental interventions in a real world setting.

WEBSITE



COLLABORATIONS





BARRIERS

LEGISLATION

Legislative barriers in the transition towards a circular food system:

- Lack of clear roles and concrete political interventions
- Lack of political action – lack of resources in political bodies
- Lack of clear political communication to citizens on how to adjust behavior
- Existing legislations do not focus enough on green businesses
- Lack of adequate and easy to receive EU subsidies

“Lack of political courage to really transform the system” – private actor

“I think, that the CO2 taxes on products are going to make a difference – that is the only way to go. Because the economy is the most important incentive. But I'm afraid that the lack of courage in our politicians means that it won't be a reality” – public sector



BARRIERS

RESOURCES

How resources hinder the transition towards a circular food system:

- Lack of economic resources to test and roll-out plant-based food economically
- Lack of functional ingredients to produce nutritious meat alternatives
- Lack of economic and human resources to follow a holistic sustainable approach
- Profit margin challenges the quality of products

"When we make plant-based alternatives ... it doesn't go to stores, or it goes into some niche corners where no one finds it ever again. And then the products disappear. Because for us, to make products of tomorrow, we must earn them today" – food producer

"And organic meat just isn't cheap. There never will be, fortunately" – food producer



BARRIERS

THE MARKET

The market can be a barrier in the circular transition:

- The capitalistic market structure forces actors to stay within non-sustainable barriers (also actors in the public sector)
- Big existing market for conventional products
- Strong influence of the agricultural lobby
- Milk production as a driver for meat production
- Consumer demand for cheap and convenient food

“Ultimately, much of the beef we consume originates from dairy production, illustrating the complexity of our food system and the need for sustainable solutions” – retailer

“We have a too big market for the wrong meat” – food producer

“It’s hard for consumers that they suddenly have to become better than professionals” – public actor

BARRIERS

**SOCIAL &
CONSUMPTION**

Social barriers in the transition to a circular food system:

- Consumer reluctance to change purchasing and cooking habits or try new foods
- Consumer habits (e.g. consumers are used to a large selection of meat products)
- Convenience in everyday lives and less time spent on groceries and cooking
- Lack of knowledge on how to prepare vegetarian dishes or meat alternatives
- Loud counter voices

“People will only demand food which they have tried before” – retailer

“We need to make convenience for the better” – public actor

“They (leaders) need to challenge these few, often very few employees who are critical, but who shout out loud about it” – private actor

AMERICA IS PRIVILEGED TO SPEND HER BLOOD AND HER MIGHT FOR THE PRINCIPLES
THAT GAVE HER BIRTH AND HAPPINESS AND THE PEACE WHICH SHE HAS TREASURED

CHALLENGES

LEGISLATION

Legislative challenges in the transition to a circular food system:

- Flaws in the current system
- Big market of non-organic food
- Big market for meat products
- Long supply chains and import
- Current food system is financially liable but not ecologically

*"We need (the system) to think broader about sustainability because it's so simple-minded"
– food producer*

"How can we have a system that is so immortal? Or a system that is completely skewed about the fact that things do not cost what they should cost" – food producer

CHALLENGES

RESOURCES

How a lack in resources challenge the transition:

- Being a small actor with little resources – a challenge to reach market volume with alternative products
- High costs associated with the development of green product lines
- Lack of methods for change (e.g. targets and implement tools) and to assess and benchmark green initiatives
- A skilled workforce is missing to produce healthy green food
- Upscale – focusing on scale without compromising on quality
- Role out test-sites and test-stores
- Identify trends and current issues

“But we must sell through wholesalers, and that is not very interesting, because we are a small company. So, there are some structural changes that are very, very difficult. What we try is to show efficacy and variety, so we show that it can be used in new alternatives” – food producer



CHALLENGES

THE MARKET

Challenges faced by the market in the circular transition:

- Market meat alternatives
- Understand and enter new markets (mass market vs. experimental market)
- Import and production areas are challenging local and seasonal production
- Improve and ensure high-quality and nutritious meat-alternative products
- Be part of the transition as a meat producer

"We build the road that we are driving on" – food producer

"And when we need to test things, we don't just have a structure for this. And that's a huge challenge for us" – retailer

"Bringing a new product, a new concept into a new market for new consumers" – food producer



CHALLENGES

**SOCIAL &
CONSUMPTION**

Social challenges in the transition to a circular food system:

- Lack of consumer acceptance and willingness to pay more for food
- Understand cultural change, emotions, habits, and language used
- Vocabulary and framing of green products

“There is cultural change, there are habits, there is language influencing our purchasing behavior” – private actor

“We live in a country where you spend an incredibly small part of your income on food” – retailer

“Should it be an alternative, or a replacement, or a stand-alone product?” – food producer



NEEDS & WISHES

LEGISLATION

Legislative needs in the transition to a circular food system:

- Actions from the regional and national governments – establish a system that encourages sustainable change (e.g. tax reduction, fining system, CO2 taxes etc.)
- Incentivize sustainable practices
- Involvement of the municipality – need for local urban green development
- Democratize sustainability
- Need for decision-makers on local, national, and international levels
- Follow a whole system approach including all actors in the food system and taking the environmental system into account

"I think we try to do many things, and we try to team up with others who know more about specific things. But we also know that sometimes we need decision makers who say this is the way we should do it" – retailer

NEEDS & WISHES

RESOURCES



BEACON

Required resources in the circular transition:

- Active participation – being an advocate for the green transition
- Financial support in the transition
- Need for public-private partnerships and new collaborations
- Need for green canteens
- Personal initiative (bottom-up initiatives)

“(We need personal initiatives). I truly believe that's the approach to it. Whether it's an older worker who works with logistics and thinks it's a hustle, or whether it's the younger intern who thinks this is going too slow” – public actor

“And when we talk about sustainability, we need to talk about economics and what we can produce as a country” – food producer



NEEDS & WISHES

THE MARKET

Market needs to transition to a circular food system:

- Adjust quantities of meat production
- Process the whole animal and avoid food waste
- Focus on local production
- Increase market share of sustainable food production
- Make meat alternatives easily accessible
- Promote as *“plant-based foods”* and not an alternative

“Increasing consideration for local and seasonal production” – food producer



NEEDS & WISHES

SOCIAL & CONSUMPTION

Social needs in the transition to a circular food system:

- Increased consumer demand for plant-based foods and move consumers to a new normal of plant-based products
- Create awareness and competencies among citizens
- Change in lifestyle and habits towards a more sustainable food consumption
- Focus on next generation
- Do not blame society for eating meat but show pathways for change
- Keep a hopeful future narrative

"We are people who have an everyday life...and we go to work, and there is a canteen. And we're not in that canteen to save the world, we're in that canteen to enjoy. Just as we are down shopping, not to save the world, but to buy dinner. So, the aim is not to blame meat but to provide delicious green food" – food producer



NEEDS & WISHES

SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION

How to communicate the transition:

- Collaborative communication and initiatives
- More informed and open communication
- Frame it as a crisis
- Internal and external communication
- Gradual change over time
- Narrative of pleasure not a forced change
- Knowledge sharing

"The customer will learn over time" – retailer

"Transform the conversation into a collaborative project"- retailer



OPPORTUNITIES

LEGISLATION

Legislative opportunities and wishes in the transition to a circular food system:

- Implement national green targets
- Top-down decisions to enforce change (also in private companies)
- Reallocate money and subsidies towards green actors

“Implement approaches (e.g. a structural initiative tax systems) that encourage the change of the system and plant-based food sales rather than meat consumption” – public actor



OPPORTUNITIES

RESOURCES

Resources can be opportunities in the circular transition:

- Reallocate money and subsidies as a resources to develop innovative green products
- Redefine and strengthen the food sector
- Create food communities

“Reallocate some of all the subsidies that they do for the meat industry and for the dairy industry, put it into the upcoming plant-based industry, that could be a smart move. And there's a lot of money that could be moved around” – food producer



OPPORTUNITIES

THE MARKET



BEACON

Opportunities within the market to transition to a circular food system:

- Increase fruit and vegetable sales
- Focus on regional and seasonal production
- Produce high-quality meat products with less quantities
- Learn from other markets and countries
- Be a small and agile actor as an opportunity to change the market
- High sales margins on fruit and vegetables

"If we just eat Danish beef, we will reduce our consumption in Denmark by 56 percent. Without anyone having to make a change. Without anything wrong. Without announcing anyone, or anything" – private actor



OPPORTUNITIES

SOCIAL & CONSUMPTION

Social opportunities to reach a circular transition in the food sector:

- Reach out to citizens and make plant-base food available
- Show up alternatives as the new normal and not a drastic change
- Consumers are willing to change their habits

"No, it should not be a sacrifice, it should not be a compromise" – retailer

"Doing the change doesn't need to be a compromise on pleasure and quality, there are plenty of beautiful, pleasurable culinary experiences which are plant-based. So I think the whole narrative that it's a sacrifice is very, very dangerous" – public actor

"None of us does this overnight" – public actor