

The XX ISA World Congress of Sociology June 25-July 1, 2023 in Melbourne, Australia

RC 40 : Sociology of Agriculture and Food

Speaker

Rachel Reckinger PhD, University of Luxembourg

rachel.reckinger@uni.lu, +352 46 66 44 66 26, <https://food.uni.lu>



Abstract for the session: Alternative Food Futures: Connecting Research with Citizen Politics

Goodness Groceries! Can a mobile sustainable food shopping App foster food literacy and ethical choices? Entailments for suppliers, citizens and researchers

Within currently rising concerns around sustainability of food systems, in the related economic areas of regenerative production modes, responsible supply chains and informed consumption, there often remains a *practice gap* between what citizens know they should do and what they actually do. This is preceded by a *knowledge gap*: the knowledge of what a sustainable product specifically is tends not to be entirely consensual, blurred with potentially contradicting injunctions between different claims of sustainability. Instead of trying to solve this puzzle with metrics, we propose an App that makes various components of sustainability transparent, thus *qualifying sustainability complexity*. Our aim is not to hierarchically determine ‘the best’ sustainable choice, but rather to relationally empower citizens to choose the product with the sustainability criteria that most fit their values and priorities.

Goodness Groceries! is a University of Luxembourg consumer study piloting a mobile sustainable food shopping App in partnership with a supermarket chain. The App acts as a virtual shopping companion providing eco-responsible and ethical product information of selected daily food products, each time for up to four types: local organic, local conventional, imported organic and imported conventional. The information provided is based on self-assessments made by product suppliers. Each food item is granted criteria in the four main themes of Environment, Social Well-being, Economic Well-being and Good Governance, subdivided into relevant indicators (SAFA guidelines, FAO 2014) – marked with easy-to-recognise icons. The user-friendly App is designed to scan alternatives of the same product via a QR code whilst shopping, to analyse if this helps consumers make an informed choice – or not, and why.

Starting in Autumn 2022, entailments of the (ongoing) study and App in terms of structural obstacles for researchers, necessary supply chain adaptations for suppliers and analysis of citizens’ shopping habits and App usage feedback will be discussed.

Key words

Mobile sustainable food shopping App; food literacy; ethical consumption choices; citizen science