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Rethink food policy: citizens demand more co-determination and less division

Eating is much more than just taking in food: 84 percent of Germans consciously consider their diet. For the majority, nutrition is a central topic, but many perceive the public debate as divisive and patronising.

According to the latest nutrition study by the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the organisation More in Common, citizens want policies that promote healthy, regional, and affordable food – without regulations or bans. At the same time, they are calling for more say in shaping the food system.

For the study 'Mine, yours, ours? What is important to us as a society when it comes to nutrition', 2024 people were asked about their thoughts and desires regarding nutrition in September and October 2024.

Between pleasure, conscience and social change

The majority of people in Germany (62%) are satisfied with their diet. Taste (89%), price (76%) and health aspects (72%) have the greatest influence on their food choices. However, social factors such as regionality and animal welfare are also gaining in importance. Many respondents say that they actually want to eat more healthily and sustainably, but see everyday stress, rising prices and their own lack of willpower as obstacles.
At the same time, many people feel under pressure from the public debate on nutrition: 70 percent perceive it as polarising, and 42 percent feel attacked by other eating styles. This is particularly evident in the tensions between vegans and meat-eaters, who often view each other pejoratively.

'We want to help make the discourse on nutrition more objective,' says Dr Tabea Lissner, team leader of the Climate Change team at the Robert Bosch Stiftung. 'The results of the study show that many people want to have a say and help shape it. A healthy and sustainable diet is a joint task – politics, business and society must create the framework conditions and involve people.'

Politics should set the framework – without patronising

A clear majority of people in Germany see a need for action in nutrition policy: 62 percent of those surveyed consider the current nutrition policy to be ineffective. Almost two-thirds of Germans see a great need for social change in nutrition policy. They want clear political framework conditions – but without bans or paternalism.
At the same time, three quarters of those surveyed want to have a say – for example through referendums. 55 per cent would like to participate in political processes in an advisory capacity, for example in citizens' councils.

'Nutrition is a highly personal topic for people,' says David Melches, author of the study and research associate at More in Common. 'Therefore, it is extremely important to communicate in an open-ended and equal manner. All interested parties should be concerned with understanding people's needs and concerns – not lecturing them.'

People see dealing with rising food prices, food waste and unhealthy diets and their consequences for children and young people as political priorities. The extinction of traditional grocery stores and factory farming are also seen as challenges.

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Further information

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