**WORKSTREAM CHARTER 2.** Demand: Consumer Intent and Product Experience.

**Summary**

A shift towards healthy and sustainable food consumption habits depends on increased consumer demand for foods that are most compatible with healthy and sustainable dietary patterns, while reducing those which are not. This charter outlines the scope of workstream 2, how it relates to workstream 1 and, the associated set of game-changing solutions it seeks to identify.

**Context: Behavioural Theory**

To influence consumer demand for healthier and more sustainable foods, we must look towards the evidence on which factors most influence our decisions about what to eat. In the field of behavioral science, one of the most useful models that we currently have available to us is the ‘two system’ or ‘dual process’ model of decision making[[1]](#footnote-1).

In brief, this model states that we have two distinct systems in the brain that we use to make different kinds of decisions. The first, System 1, is our **automatic**, default decision making system. It is quick, instinctual and is always functioning. The purpose of this system is efficiency and ease – it allows us to make day-to-day choices quickly and easily without having to deliberate each by weighing up the costs and benefits. In contrast, our second, System 2, is more **deliberative** and requires our conscious engagement to operate. It produces decisions that are weighted for their subjective expected utility, but requires our energy and attention to work, meaning it performs sub-optimally when these resources are in short supply[[2]](#footnote-2). While consumer information and education often assume that System 2 is the overall dominating system (so called “information paradigm”), it is often the automatic system that is in the drivers’ seat for everyday food decisions. Behaviour change can be stimulated both ways: in some cases, knowledge and motivation precede behaviour, but often, behaviour precedes and leads motivation and attitudes, i.e., people learn from the sheer experience of new behaviours, testing new foods and food routines and then adapt their preferences.

Like many decisions that are made quickly, food choice is often ruled by our automatic System 1. In many instances, our decisions on what to eat are influenced by cues in the environment that surround our choice-making – aspects like the availability, accessibility, advertising and display of a product.

For this reason, to transform demand towards more healthy and sustainable diets we need to develop a portfolio of game-changing solutions that supports food consumers automatic System 1 and deliberative System 2 decision-making systems. Solutions that are grounded in the science of decision making.

Typically, behavioural change, also as regards food choices, is incremental and slow. We are creatures of habit. It takes many steps, stimuli, and feedback loops; social norms need time to change, as do tastes and customs. Some preferences seem to be more hard-wired, both socially (e.g. gender roles) and genetically (e.g. preference for tastes). However, we have seen surprisingly fast changes in case of disruptive events or major crisis (such as COVID). People adapt surprisingly quickly to challenging new situations as well as to new life situations (e.g. after a health crisis, having a child, moving to another culture). It is during these situational windows of opportunity where people are most likely to shift to new food styles.

**Demand Transformation Agenda**

Within the context of this behavioural framework, we recognize four key areas that require game-changing solutions to enable a transition towards healthier and more sustainable diets. These include transforming; (a) shopping and dining environments, (b) media and public environments, (c) product and meal experience and, (d) consumer motivation and capability. WS2 is concerned with the latter two.

It is important to note that whilst solutions may be anchored in one area of transformation some are likely to span multiple. For example, efforts to label products with environmental or health information may be founded in improving consumer intent through knowledge but, as with the case of the Chilean front-of-package label[[3]](#footnote-3), it could also be used as a mechanic to influence shopping environments and advertising media.

**Scope of Workstream 2**

* **Product and Meal Experience**

Workstream 2 will seek solutions that help improve the product and meal experience of healthier and more sustainable food. This agenda will incorporate ideas and innovations that help improve the quality, taste, multi-sensory experience, convenience, price and value perception of such products and meals. Examples include;

* Supporting healthy and sustainable **product reformulation and innovation** in order to eliminate *trans*-fatty acids (TFA) by 2023, reduce salt intakes by 30% by 2025 and reduce free sugar intakes to less than 10% of total dietary energy.
* Increase implementation of **fiscal policies**, including increasingimposition of taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) by 30% by 2025 from the current level of 73 countries while simultaneously stimulating innovation around and consumer acceptance of healthier beverages.
* Supporting the expansion of **new and emerging products**—including meat replacement products, plant-based proteins, algae and insects—that help support in healthier and more sustainable diets.
* Product innovation to help improve **convenience** for consumers (e.g. pre-cut veg or pre-cooked pulses)
* Supporting the knowledge and skills of **culinary professionals** to prepare plant-rich meals that are as delicious, filling and profitable as meat-based dishes.
* **Consumer Motivation and Capability**

Workstream 2 will also seek solutions that help improve consumers motivation and capability with respect to healthier and more sustainable food. This agenda will incorporate ideas that help improve consumers knowledge of such food, enhances cooking and food preparation skills, builds positive emotional associations, evolves social norms and propagates social contagion, enables personal goal setting etc. Examples include;

* Support policies to expand and **improve education** — for children, adolescents and adults — about nutrition and healthy and sustainable dietary practices.
* Mobilize health, education, faith-based and culinary professional communities and local celebrities as agents to help influence **public perceptions and social norms** related to healthier more sustainable food.
* Multi-layered targeted **communication campaign** that can motivates consumers to want to improve their diets and promote individual nutritious foods such as veg or beans.
* Program to help build **consumers skills** in preparing and cooking healthy and sustainable meals.
* Provide guidance to define and describe healthy, safe and sustainable diets and increase the percentage of countries with national food-based **dietary guidelines**.
1. D. Kahneman (2011), Thinking Fast and Slow, (Strack F, Deutsch R. 2004Reflective and impulsive determinants of social behavior. Pers. Soc. Psychol. Rev. 8, 220–247. (doi:10.1207/s15327957pspr0803\_1) Crossref, PubMed, ISI, Google Scholar) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsta.2016.0371 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1003015 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)