



FOCAS

This project addresses the Call's third theme: understanding consumer behaviour to encourage (more) sustainable food choice. It takes a 'theories of practice' approach, examining the largely taken-for-granted, routine and socially embedded character of food-related consumer behaviour. Rather than adopting a deficit model (where consumers are assumed to lack the relevant knowledge or skills on which to make informed choices), the project seeks to understand the different stocks of knowledge which consumers use when making such decisions. The project will explore how consumers make sense of a range of different sources of information about the healthiness and sustainability of their food choices.

The project will focus on the complex and contested category of 'convenience' food, often regarded as among the least healthy and most unsustainable of dietary options (high in salt, sugar and saturated fat; highly processed with many artificial additives; often including a high proportion of imported ingredients and associated with excess packaging and high levels of waste). Taking a whole-chain approach, but focusing mainly on the consumption end of the supply chain, the project will focus specifically on: processed baby-food; supermarket ready-meals; workplace food; and food-box schemes. Each project will investigate the interplay between sustainability, health and convenience, including the way these competing discourses are negotiated in practice.

The project team and case studies are drawn from four EU member states: Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the UK, with each case study including a comparative element to ensure that the case studies are fully integrated. A common set of conceptual categories drawn from practice theory (practices, meanings, embeddedness and 'do-ability') will be employed across all four case studies and regular team meetings will further enhance the comparative dimensions and European added value of the project.