

Sustainability, behavioral change and consumers' freedom: the case of food

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There is a growing consensus that, in order to pursue sustainability in a more effective way, policies should give more attention on the demand side rather than on the supply side alone. However, this approach contradicts one of the most consolidated dogma of conventional economics, consumers' sovereignty. The speech aims at illustrating the reasons for this important theoretical shift and to show its policy implications. In particular, it will highlight how consumers' freedom is influenced by powerful forces in present society, and will show that strategies to address behavioral change can increase rather than limit consumers' freedom. In a renewed policy framework, public policies may act to remove existing barriers to consumers' freedom, acting on the 'choice environment' to make consumers' choice better informed and more responsible. The speech will concentrate on the case of food, focusing on the role of municipalities and of food movements.