

Food Environments for Planetary Health (Food-Planeth)

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Project lead: Peter von Philipsborn, Chair of Public Health and Health Services Research, LMU Munich

Project partners:

- Achim Spiller, Chair for Marketing of Food and Agricultural Products, University of Göttingen
- Michael Laxy, Professorship of Public Health and Prevention, Technical University of Munich

Scientific and policy background: The term planetary health has been coined for approaches in research, policy and practice which address the complex interdependencies between human health, society, and the Earth's natural systems including the climate. One key area in which these interdependencies play out is the global food system. Unhealthy diets are a major risk factor for ill health worldwide, and the food system is a significant driver of global environmental change, which in turn has important implications for human health. Crucially, the global food system is responsible for a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions, contributing significantly to climate change, which poses multiple risks to human health. To respect planetary boundaries while promoting human health, changes throughout the food system are needed, including improved production techniques, waste avoidance and, crucially, dietary change towards healthy and sustainable diets, i.e. diets that minimize disease risks and environmental impacts.

Project objectives: The new junior research group's overarching aim is to support the creation of food environments that are supportive of healthy and sustainable diets, i.e., diets that maximise human health and well-being while minimising the food system's environmental footprint, including its greenhouse gas emissions.

Project outline: The research group will achieve its objectives by: i) producing interdisciplinary evidence syntheses and primary research on key policies for supporting healthy and sustainable diets; ii) deriving recommendations for priority actions through systems-based policy analysis; iii) engaging with policy and practice stakeholders, including the public; and iv) building and developing networks, capacities and methods for interdisciplinary and intersectoral food system research and action.

Project principles: Throughout its work, the junior research group will take a planetary health perspective, considering human health and environmental sustainability and their interdependencies in a systemic context, and combine scientific rigour with a focus on policy impact. Specifically, the group’s work is guided by the following principles:

- A focus on key policies with a large potential for population-level and system-wide impact and on strategic research questions essential for resolving implementation bottlenecks.
- A systems perspective attentive to the interdependencies between human health and well-being, societal and political dynamics, economic considerations, and the Earth’s natural systems, with a particular focus on the climate system.
- The integration of knowledge translation and public engagement with science into all phases of the research process, and close partnerships with policy and practice stakeholders.
- A combination of interdisciplinary, multi-method approaches with a high degree of scientific rigour and the use of international methodological gold standards.
- A global perspective, aiming to generate evidence that is of international relevance, while also considering challenges specific to the European Union (EU) and Germany.
- An open, cooperative spirit and research culture, a network approach to science and flexible collaborations with a range of academic and civil society partners.

Project structure: The proposed project structure comprises three pillars and three cross-cutting work areas, with one work package each (see figure 1).

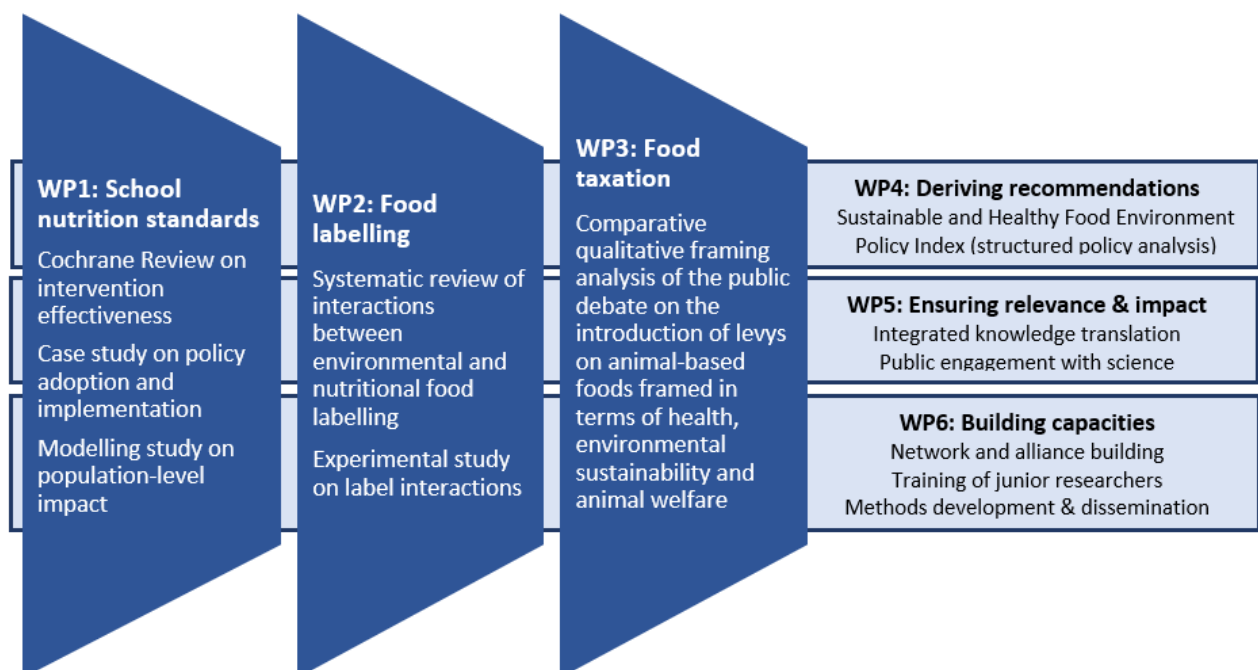


Figure 1: Overview of the project structure. Abbreviations: WP: work package.

Contact: Peter von Philipsborn, pphilipsborn@ibe.med.uni-muenchen.de