

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very glad to be here and to be able to listen to the contributions from so many different sides – thanks for the invite!

Isn't it a good moment for talking about activism? Oh yes, and I am sure that the movement of civil society is going on.

Civil society is getting impatient with the speed our governments are recognizing, taking seriously – and let alone taking up action in order to react appropriately to solve or prevent the most pressing global problems and catastrophes. Civil society is speaking out, is showing its discontent. And we have seen already how this kind of civil outspokenness, sometimes unruliness, how peacefully going out on the streets in millions worldwide does work.

And yes, current developments such as repeated natural disasters, climate change, the loss of biodiversity, a looming repeated financial disaster is responded by world leaders with trying to keep the status quo of foremost growth-driven economies – while it is very clear that we need a fundamental change in the way we look at the life of humans in nature on planet earth.

One human activity that is strongly connected with, yet more, one that contributes to the pressing problems is the food system. It is as Line Gordon has stressed yesterday, one of the biggest drivers of the pressing problems. And above all the current food system is not fit to keep the world's population fed, let alone fed healthily.

There is no doubt, political decision-makers will have to start on a quite different path and make courageous and responsible efforts to enable the necessary transition from current unsustainable towards sustainable food systems.

Activism and education are two additional fields that have the potential to push the transition towards a sustainable future, because

civil society has the power to influence policy: We are experiencing it regarding Climate Change.

The political scientist Erica Chenoweth's has shown in her work, that a maximum of 3.5% of the population is needed to mobilize. This means that if enough people come together, a political or belief system can be overthrown and substituted by another. That means that we need 3,5% of food educated and knowledgeable people in order to start the move towards the change of the food system. – And I think, this is already under way! - The more there are, the better. Hence, it becomes increasingly important to produce the right kind of knowledge and to spread it to citizens, decision-makers and all key players involved in food production chains.

This is why the international organization Slow Food, focuses on raising-awareness about the current global food system and by educating children from the cradle about sustainable alternatives. Our goal is to inform people and to thereby enable them to take conscious and informed consumer decisions. And Slow Food has done this for decades.

Slow Food was founded in Italy in 1986 and after almost three decades, millions of people now associate with Slow Food worldwide and commit to a food system that will be able to feed future generations. Slow Food follows the idea of food democracy, which can be defined as a universal right to access good, clean and fair food,- which can be translated as good tasting, giving enjoyment, healthy as being sustainably and fairly produced. Slow Food is a huge network of people that includes activists of all ages, chefs, farmers, fishermen, food artisans, experts, scientists, and researchers from more than 170 countries.

Slow Food people share this idea worldwide, but act on grassroot level with different emphasis: some emphasize on local food production

and short supply chain, others might engage in promoting agro-biodiversity, the next working on school gardens, kitchens and on a consumption shift. Slow Food food is all about connecting people and land and food, forging close ties between producers and consumers, we set up real farmers' markets, no traders and producers from afar -- and large networks in the cook's Alliance, the network of gastronomers, fishermen, farmers, small scale processors, consumers. The organization's approach to change is to educate people, to connect the different players with each other on a grassroots level as well as to mobilize civil society for a more sustainable food system. As Slow Food Germany we do the mobilizing best every January on occasion of the huge "We are fed up" demonstration against agro-industry in Berlin, along with many Civil society organizations. This event brings up to 60.000 people, farmers AND consumers out on the streets

On the consumer level, we want people to become aware of how their daily actions can trigger change, because with no other everyday action we influence the world more than with the approximately 100,000 meals that we eat on average in the course of a lifetime. With our knife and fork, at least three times a day with each meal, we decide with our consumption and eating habits which kind of food production system we support. Our food habits impact our all future: How and with what we (feed) ourselves not only affects our enjoyment and our health, but also agriculture, climate, economy, politics, health, environment, cultural landscapes and last but not least our identity.

Once people understand these interconnections of the current food system with the environment, the climate, human rights and so on, our goal is to enable them to go one step further, namely, to become a voice for a paradigm shift and transition towards more sustainable food systems.

However, I want to be absolutely clear about this: consumers alone cannot implement the transition, but through their activism they can push decision-makers towards sustainable policies.

Producing and disseminating the right information is thus key and here is, where research comes in for Slow Food and takes on a very important role in this process of producing the right knowledge.

Research can help us both, the grassroot and the decision makers to move faster and stronger into the direction of system change.

What kind of research can give us the knowledge we need? We saw it yesterday: old research and its outcomes are the ones that consolidate the current system. They do not meet the needs of change. We were not able to answer the question of how we get from current EU agri policy thinking, from high tech dairy farming, and Bayer's vision of the future to a food system needed according to the EAT Lancet report and its recommendations.

Old thinking can also be no help in meeting the SDGs.: According to the newly published Global Sustainable Development Report, "upscaling current food production practices to meet the projected food demand of the world's population in 2050 would be completely incompatible with meeting the Paris Agreement as well as many of the Sustainable Development Goals". The credo 'we need to produce more' completely ignores the fact that we already produce more than enough food for all, but that the real root of the problem is the distribution. Few data or research focuses on this aspect, how is this possible?

We do not need research that leads to more technological progress, that in return often leads to increase in output, while we know that increase in output doesn't solve the food problem Do we really need higher yields in energy-rich, nutrition poor crop commodities, in milk production in one dairy cow? More 'efficiency' in one animal? Do

we really need more fishing capacity in one vessel? Our oceans are overfished, we need to cut back in dairy and meat, and crop commodities are the base of bad food that make us ill.

Regarding the myth of 'feeding the world' we do not need an increase in output, but we need to look into the roots and causes of the distribution, of bad diets; we need to know where on the planet and by whom additional food has to be produced.

In addition, we should start thinking about less food intake, less in all areas of consumption or consumerism.

According to Slow Food's vision of good, clean and fair for all forever we need a shift in research agendas on the whole: more towards an holistic approach to food and culture and fairness in the food system; and of course the emphasis will have to be on *public goods*.

Research has to serve more actors, and, as it is already done on a small scale, it must shift towards farmer, not farming organisation representatives', participatory research.

We urgently need research in how to re-gain what is lost and needed: biodiversity, also agro-biodiversity and healthy soils. We need to know more about agroecological production, about pesticide free food production, about the health benefit of food from healthy, productive soils and the health benefits of food from non-soil production systems, including lab meat.

One last thought, we need to raise the question about the funding of research. It is not a secret that most funding, is not independent anymore. Government funding often seems to be invested in research that is meant to maintain the status quo of the "industrial food system". This is currently very visible with the new breeding technologies and other emphasis and spending.

This is why it needs advocacy to challenge decision-makers on this, why it needs activism from civil society as well from researchers so

Activism, philosophy, ideals and the right way to produce knowledge

that we set out research that have real potential to help building a sustainable future.