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Quality Of Feeding And New Lifestyles

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Abstract

The *quality of feeding*, understood as a nutrition founded on quality foods and on the varied and balanced contribution in the diet of an adequate level of nutrients, fibers, vitamins and minerals (low in fat and sugars), is one of the pillars on which a society should establish strategies for keeping in time and space its well-being.

The focus on the *quality of feeding*, however, is susceptible to a double approach: individual and collective. The individual approach, confining attention to the quality of feeding to the type of lifestyle that everyone follows, delimits the relative costs and responsibilities to a personal scope. The collective approach would instead returns the quality in the context of the externalities of a socio-economic and environmental process to be managed with appropriate forms of governance, able to extend the responsibility "over the person" and redetermine the development and the distribution of the costs of quality of feeding. In this second case, a healthy lifestyle becomes the result of a process of promotion and guidance aimed to nest sustainable behaviours and to activate virtuous circles on the base of which lifestyles then, in turn, may become the key to the sustainability of well-being in certain territories.

In view of this, the present paper aims to highlight the key role of *quality of feeding* as a determinant of the sustainability of the well-being and solicit the attention of policy makers on the need to implement appropriate governance strategies able to retract obvious market distortions through the support and promotion of healthy and natural lifestyles.

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1. Introduction

Risk assessment is one of the possible approaches to the sustainability of well-being. It consists of the identification of phenomena that in fact could jeopardize the future conditions. In this regard, the quality of feeding (along with other factors such as smoking, alcohol, obesity and physical inactivity) is one of the risky behaviour of the domain of well-being "health" (Istat, 2013). In this context, the quality of feeding, intended as a diet based on food quality and on the varied and balanced contribution of an adequate level of nutrients, fibers, vitamins and minerals (with low fat and sugar but with plenty of fruits and seasonal vegetables), it becomes one of the pillars on which societies should establish strategies for the maintenance over time and space of their own well-being.

The quality of feeding, or rather, the attention to it, is mainly related to lifestyle that everyone follows, and as such it would be confined within the framework of individual responsibility. In addition, the prevalence of the mercantile vision of well-being (rather than social, natural and generational) has determined a critical system in which lifestyles have been influenced by a feeding of utility rather than of quality, while there has been a real failure of the market represented by the "paradox of the food of the rich".

The concept of quality of feeding, however, synthesizes various aspects and ideas belonging to different categories and disciplines (diet, quality of food and agricultural products, environmental integrity, organic production, etc.). In this concept, essentially, they intertwine private interests with public interests, individual responsibility with collective responsibility, the world of production with the world of consumption.

If interpreted on the basis of an integrated view of the well-being (which in fact includes not only economic and social aspects, but also more specifically environmental and generational ones), this concept leads to:

- an essential re-insert of the responsibilities of consumption and of agro-food production compared to the social, environmental and generational problems of a territory;
- the restatement of the centrality of the type of lifestyle as the foundation of a better quality of feeding in a region.

2. The paradox of the rich's food

Since the middle of last century, the European food systems have known a substantial change in their structure. These changes have been often the result of major restructuring that has affected the global economic systems and which have led to a series of knock-on effects in the social, environmental and territorial dimensions of well-being.

In this context, a very complex dynamic has been determined in relation to the food (agricultural or transformed products) that, substantially, has seen apply to it business and territorial strategies comparable to those put in place for goods not intended to be ingested for nutrition. Or rather, the predominant idea has become that food was only an economic good, that is, an object available in limited quantities and useful, that is capable of satisfying a need: *a need of the consumer then, not a right headed to a subject*.

In other words, over time it has prevailed the idea, purely economic, that food product could contribute to the well-being of society, territories and its people as an element capable of production differentiation or diversification of business activities. This is mainly thanks to the numerous studies on the willingness to "pay" by individuals for products that have certain healthful features qualitative, ethical or otherwise.

So, it has been possible to know the exponential growth of convenience foods, because maybe they satisfy the needs of a society highly specialized but poor time to be devoted to food; or, we have seen the emergence of functional products designed with the particular purpose to offer, compared to traditional food, a more suitable benefit for health (Canene-Adams et al., 2005; Salminen et al., 1998). Equally, the organic productions today represent an answer on the market of a particular interest of a group of persons, whose expectation, basically, is to not have contaminated food or, more generally, to have no food "against nature" (Dangour et al., 2009; Doll et al., 2002; Magnusson et al. 2003; Rosen, 2010; Shepherd et al., 2005).

These are just a few examples of modern European society (and usually of societies in developed countries of the world) that, in a highly globalized and highly interconnected, has the ability to have the availability, in every place and at every time, any food product you want (thanks to the impressive innovation and technological progress of the logistics, transport and information and communications technology).

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