



TRANSPARENCY  
INNOVATION  
UNBIASED  
POLICY  
QUALITY  
INTER-DISCIPLINARY  
RESEARCH  
SCIENCE  
COMPLEXITY  
TRUST  
INDEPENDENT  
ADVANCEMENT  
**SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE**

# **“Towards sustainable food consumption”**

**ESAF – Timisoara  
12 September 2023**

# The Scientific Advice Mechanism has developed over time



Anne Glover



The Group of Chief  
Scientific Advisors (GCSA)



*Science Advice  
for Policy by  
European Academies*  
(SAPEA) consortium  
(Horizon Europe)



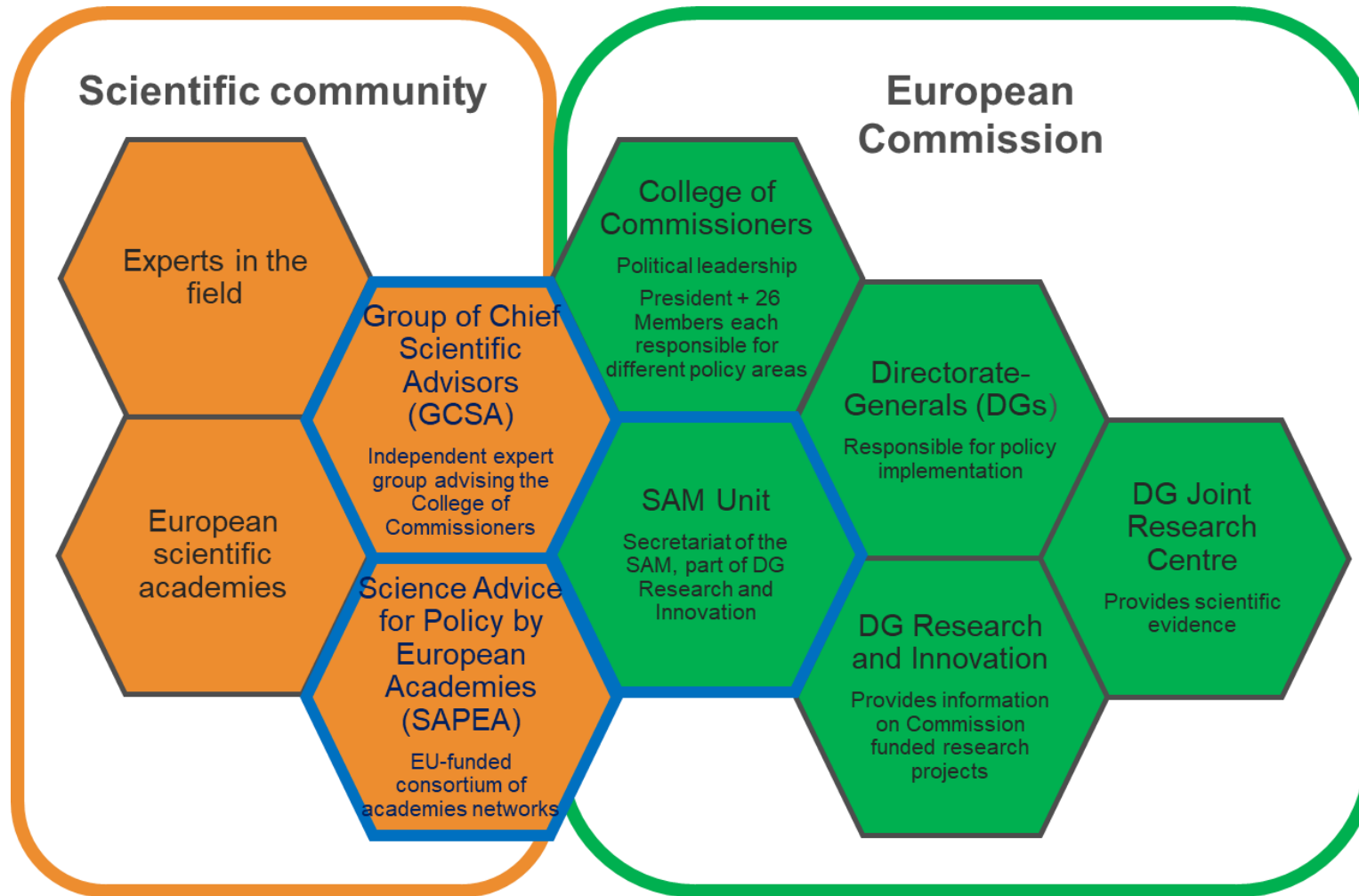
A secretariat in  
the European  
Commission



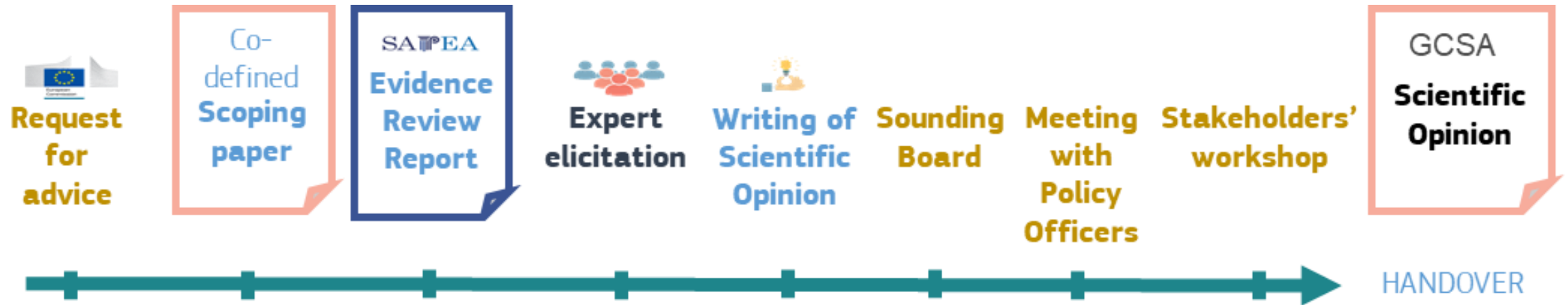
SAM can provide independent synthesis of  
evidence and policy advice on complex issues

2016

# SAM as an interface between science and policy



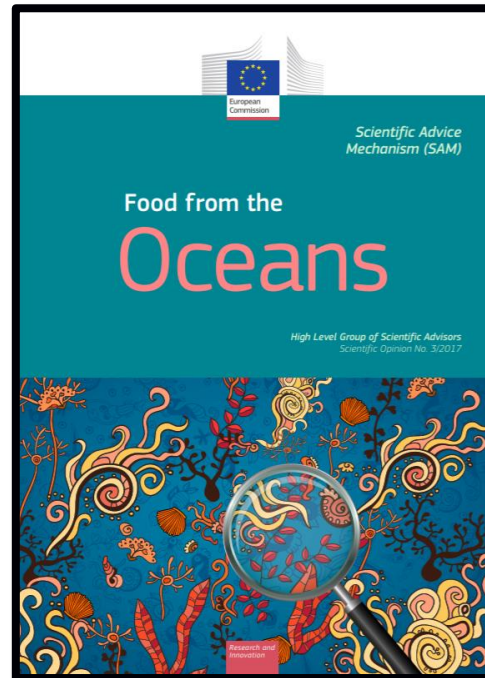
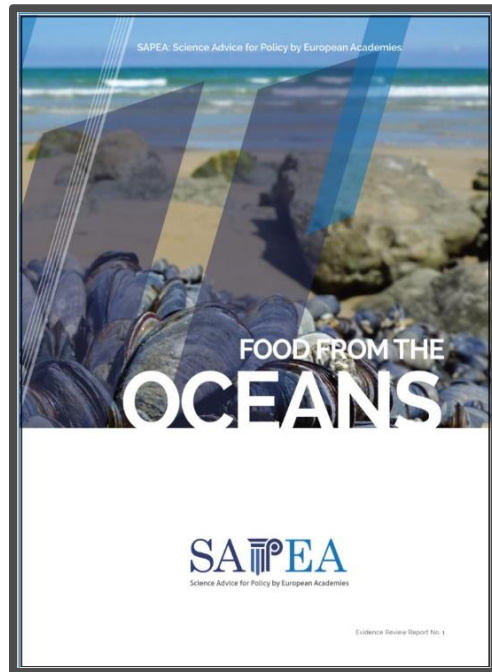
# The process of producing a scientific opinion



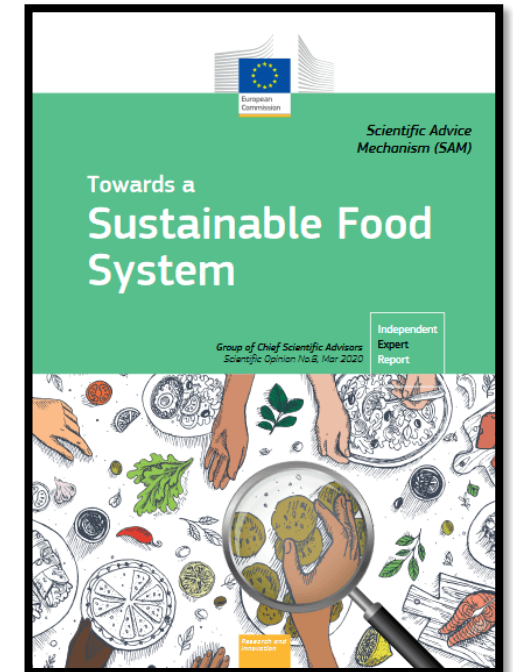
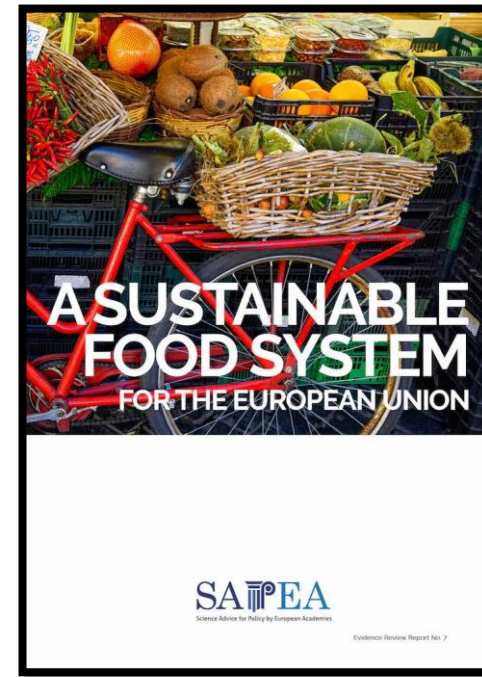
# SAM's scientific advice on sustainable food

<https://ec.europa.eu/science-advice>

2017



2020



# Towards sustainable food systems (2020 Opinion)

## Scoping question

What are workable paths to deliver an inclusive, 'just' and timely transition to an EU sustainable food system?



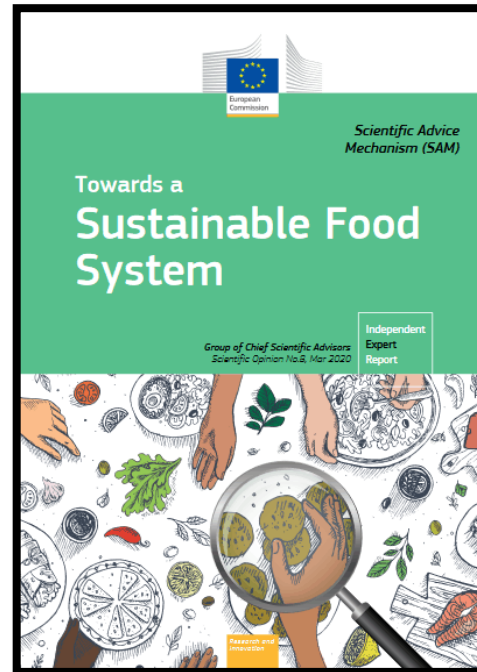
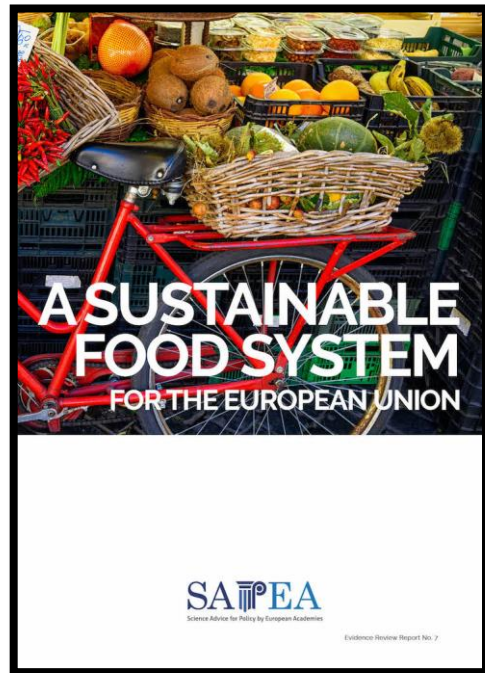
# Towards sustainable food systems (2020 Opinion)

## Recommendations

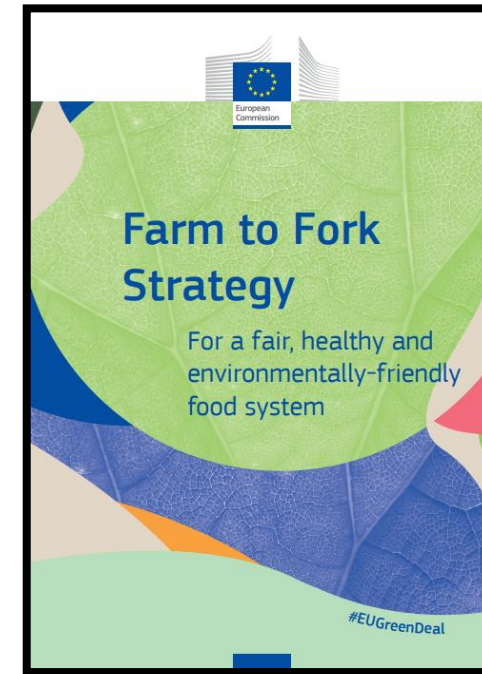
- Make **environmental, social and economic sustainability** the **central objective** of all policies relevant to food
- Adopt an **active step-wise policy transition** to integrate sustainable food system thinking into all existing EU policies
- Take a **leadership role** to support transformation of the food system at all levels
- Increase the policy focus on **food manufacturers and retailers**
- Support a **food environment that helps citizens** make sustainable choices
- **Strengthen** the more **vulnerable actors** in the food system

# Impact of the SAM scientific advice

March 2020



May 2020





# Towards sustainable food consumption

## Scoping question

What **tools** could be used at EU level, in addition to those mentioned in the 2020 Farm to Fork Strategy, to **overcome the barriers preventing consumers to adopt sustainable and healthy diets**, fostering the necessary change towards sustainability in the food environment? The Group's advice should be based on an analysis that identifies the **elements refraining consumers from making healthy and sustainable choices**.

This scoping question should be analysed by reviewing scientific evidence, including from social sciences, and taking a systemic approach which considers the **complex architecture of the food environment**.

# Towards sustainable food consumption

## Policy recommendations

# Towards sustainable food consumption: Recommendation 0

**Coordinate the adoption of a coherent mix of complementary policies that include instruments addressing incentives and disincentives, information on healthy and sustainable food, and regulatory measures.**

# Towards sustainable food consumption: Recommendation 0

- Develop a long-term vision on healthy and sustainable diets that is shared by all supply chain actors who influence the food environment, and make these actors accountable.
- Ensure coherence between different interventions that influence the food system and remove conflicting interventions.
- Ensure high-level policy coordination by developing communication channels, sustained dialogues, and a harmonised governance system.
- Monitor responses to new policies by food processors and retailers in order to anticipate any unintended effects of policy interventions.

# Towards sustainable food consumption: Recommendation 1

**Make healthy and sustainable diets the easy and affordable choice.**



# Towards sustainable food consumption: Recommendation 1

- Identify the optimal fiscal mechanisms to progressively introduce taxes on products whose frequent consumption is unhealthy and unsustainable, with appropriate communication and evaluation measures.
- Make healthy and sustainable diets more affordable.
- Adjust subsidy schemes for production systems with low environmental performances, where needed.
- Address the root causes of poor nutrition through social policies aimed at eradicating poverty and investing in better education for all.

# Towards sustainable food consumption: Recommendation 2

**Secure the provision of adequate and trusted information about the environmental and health impacts of different foods in order to encourage healthy and sustainable decision-making by all actors in the food system.**

# Towards sustainable food consumption: Recommendation 2

- Generalise the inclusion of sustainability criteria in national dietary guidelines.
- Define and communicate EU-wide and national-scale time-bound goals for healthy and sustainable consumption.
- Develop both information campaigns to raise consumer awareness about health and the sustainability impacts of diets and education programmes to improve food literacy.
- Encourage consumers to establish more direct connections with primary food producers in order to increase food literacy.
- Make better use of the potential of the digital food environment to inform consumers about healthy and sustainable diets and to reduce food waste.
- Restrict advertisement for food products and drinks whose frequent consumption is unhealthy and unsustainable.
- Engage with all food system actors in a transparent manner and give an equal voice to all stakeholders in order to obtain healthy and sustainable diets and to overcome expected opposition from some food industry actors to some policy measures.

# Towards sustainable food consumption: Recommendation 3

**Mandate new interventions to promote the availability and accessibility of products for healthy and sustainable diets.**

# Towards sustainable food consumption: Recommendation 3

- Encourage Member States to regulate the placement in retail outlets of products whose frequent consumption is unhealthy and unsustainable.
- Require food product reformulation in order to increase availability of healthy and sustainable food.
- Restrict EU imports of food commodities from places where food production causes major environmental damage, either by border taxes or by bans.



# Thank you



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