

Miriam Trübner<sup>1</sup>, Natascha Nisic<sup>1</sup>, Stefanie Kley<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany; <sup>2</sup>Frankfurt University, Germany

### **Sustainable Food Consumption – A Question of Social Differentiation?**

The growing global interest in sustainability can be seen most clearly in the expansion of organic food stores and the increased visibility and integration of organic and fair-trade products in regular supermarkets, discount stores, and even fast-food chains. Although the concept of sustainability seems to be omnipresent nowadays, little is known about the social structure of sustainable consumption. Against this background, we want to identify consumer segments in sustainable food consumption by drawing on the sociological approaches of lifestyle and social class.

According to Bourdieu (1984), consumer choices are a matter of both economic and cultural capital, reflecting class-specific differences in taste. In his analyses, the taste of the working classes is characterized by simple, 'strong' food served in substantial portions. Contrastingly, the dominant taste of the upper classes prefers fine, exquisite dishes. The middle classes strive to imitate the dominant taste, albeit their lower levels of resources force them to asceticism. In addition, Barlösius (2016) identifies a natural taste in the upwardly mobile middle classes which advocates healthy and eco-friendly food choices, characterized by a self-imposed asceticism for the sake of moral superiority.

Using a representative survey on nutrition and consumer behavior conducted in 2018 in Hamburg, Germany (N≈1200), we apply multiple correspondence analyses (MCA) in order to visualize the associations between consumption routines (shopping places, meat consumption, cooking practices), food preferences, and attitudes towards sustainability with sociodemographic characteristics. Social position clearly matters in the typology of sustainable food choice thus obtained, but the multifaceted motives for sustainable consumption are not solely determined by it.