

## Spirituality, Socialization and Knowledge: a Philosophical Approach to the Slow Food Agri-food System

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### ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to develop a better understanding on the potential to recognise a fourth principle encompassed by the slow food movement – agri-food philosophy – supported in three factors: spirituality, socialization, and knowledge. Employing a Delphi method to forecast if this new principle might constitute a future trend in agri-food systems, in a ten years timeframe, twenty-four national experts from business, administration and academic backgrounds have contributed their thoughts over three rounds. The results allowed to predict several trends associated with each of the three factors. Firstly, regarding the Socialization factor, findings revealed the growing importance given to three trends: the value of food, the "training of taste" and the "wise gourmand" of food traditions and artisans. This scenario can occur in 89.4%. Secondly, and concerning the Spirituality factor, the panel of experts validated that food associated with physical exercise and meditation will be the most important axes for achieving harmony of being. This trend observes can occur 82.8%. Finally, and in relation to the Knowledge factor, it was concluded that a standard of conduct assumed by all stakeholders will be possible based on full transparency (from raw materials to consumption) and access to true information. This trend can occur in 88.9%. This research allowed to conclude that there is space to reflect on the importance of philosophical standpoints to forecast trends in future agri-food systems. More importantly, it can stimulate serious and deeply critical thinking about the current state of agri-food systems and contribute to help and develop new research approaches, on the need to promote changes, not only in lifestyles and food consumption, but mainly in establishing and improving more transparency in all types of agri-food systems.

**Keywords:** *Slow Food; Agri-food trends; Delphi; Spirituality; Socialization; Education; Supply and Demand Chain*

## 1 Introduction

For decades, global agri-food systems have been subject of heated debates in academic, political and practitioners' domains. Claimed to be unsustainable, resistant to change, unfair for producers, untruth for consumers and misaligned with science, politics, economics and technology, current agri-food systems reveal a lack of deep strategic thinking, political commitment and involvement of the different areas of knowledge (Conti et al., 2021; Dias and Alas, 2016; Dias and Nogueira, 2019). Agrarian deception and misinformation have contributed to, and reinforced, high degrees of illiteracy about food and the table, places, people, modes of production, preparation, authenticity, leading to a lost in agri-food systems DNA, whose heritage was built centuries ago. Alternative views on agri-food systems, grounded on knowledge sharing and consumer-producer connectedness are gravely needed to challenge current ways of conceiving food, from the land to the table (Cacciolatti and Lee, 2022; Labelle, 2004). The Slow Food (SF) movement is one such alternative, aimed at counteracting fast and unsustainable food systems (Kjørstad, 2017), protecting and preserving agricultural and culinary patrimonies (Laudan, 2004) and calling urgent action, since their first Manifesto, to search for a far-reaching agenda with food-related concerns (Slow Food, 1989).

The main proposal of the SF movement is to work upon agri-food systems rooted in three interconnected principles: good, clean and fair (Petrini, 2005). According the official SF website, available resources and manuals such as 'The Slow Food Manifesto for Quality' above referred (Slow Food, 1989), the "good", undoubtedly a very subjective characteristic, stands for pleasurable, quality flavoursome and healthy food, the "clean" embraces the notion of production that does not harm the environment, and finally, the "fair" symbolizes equity for consumers and producers, that is to say, accessible prices for consumers and fair work conditions and payments for producers. Since then, other paths were pointed out over the years to move forward a better understanding of the complexity of agri-food and forestry systems, discussing the "Centrality of Food" as the basis of human existence, that is "the firm belief that food is the primary right of man, and that a healthy food system ensures not only the survival of humankind, but of the entire planet" (Petrini, 2012).

Drawing on the SF approach to move towards more sustainable agri-food systems, and acknowledging that neither the academic or anecdotal literature on SF explains how philosophical and spiritual arguments might be useful to research and further understand sustainable food choices, this paper further develops previous research on the topic (Dias and Nogueira, 2018, 2019) and explores the inclusion of a fourth complementary principle-agri-food philosophy, divided in three main factors: spirituality, socialization, and knowledge. The main goal of this research was: i) design a new SF principle to reinforce the SF model, ii) develop the discussion and define the main trends around the spirituality, socialization and knowledge factors.

The paper is organized as follows: the following section overviews the still scarce literature concerning the SF movement and regarding philosophical and spiritual dimensions of social practices related to food (growing, preparing, consuming food). Section 3 describes methodological decisions on the adoption of the Delphi method with 24 experts aimed at testing and validating the new principle. This is followed by the presentation of results in section 4. Finally, the last section concludes this paper by outlining the main contributions of the study along to its limitations and suggestions for future research.

## 2 Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Slow Food Movement

Slow Food was founded by food activist Petrini in 1986, originally to counteract fast food chains or as simply put by Ritzer (2001) to resist the 'McDonaldization' of food. Their advocates contest many aspects of the modern capitalistic economy and defend a multidisciplinary approach to sustainable food production and consumption towards more balanced and slower paces of life. Hence, the movement aims to protect our right to consume good, fair and clean food, while respecting the Planet, conserving regional, traditional and artisan cuisines, techniques and products, respecting food heritage, promoting fair trade, protecting biodiversity always in harmony with the ecosystems and with the gastronomic pleasure in mind (Morrisey, 2010; Petrini, 2001, 2006, 2007, 2013; Ritzer, 2001). Overall the philosophy behind SF is that Eating is an agricultural act, and that informed consumers make better decisions and become co-producers of good food.

The Slow Food movement in Portugal was born with the first convivium held in 2009 in Alto Minho Region, located in Arcos de Valdevez, a part of the Portuguese National biodiversity park, denominated by UNESCO as a World Biosphere Reserve. In the Portuguese context, the movement is directly associated with 32 classified references of food in the Arch of Taste Project. Currently, there are 6 SF regions in Portugal: Alto Minho, Porto, Lisboa, Alentejo, Guardiões do Montado do Freixo do Meio and Algarve.

Despite its growing visibility around the World (present in 160 countries), the contributions of the academic and scientific community are still modest towards a deep discussion on the impact of SF in sustainable agri-food systems. There are some anecdotal (Morrisey, 2010; Petrini, 2005, 2013), conceptual (Chrzan, 2004; Laudan, 2004) and empirical studies (Dias and Afonso, 2015; Dias and Alas, 2016; Germov et al., 2010; Hayes-conroy, 2010; Kjørstad, 2017) presenting a diversity of approaches on the movement. For example Pietrykowski (2004) embraces a social economy approach to explore how SF fruitfully balances the central role of the material pleasure of eating while promoting social and environmentally conscious food consumption. Wexler, Oberlander and Shankar (2017) discuss the ideological premises of SF and claim that they have successfully engaged millions of followers by creating a critical mass from other social movements sharing similar ideologies. Using SF as an empirical case study, Parkins and Craig (2015) draw on the importance of culture in the places, practices and politics within emerging alternative food networks. As argued before (Dias and Nogueira, 2018, 2019), in opposition to other movements based on "consumption for consumption" where the struggle hangs on supermarket shelves, SF proposes to resolve this conflict, with the dining table as starting point. In doing so, SF provides space to discuss food as convivial, conscientious and ethical. In other words, pleasurable sensations are reinforced by ethical considerations in a convivial atmosphere (Dunlap, 2012). On the other hand, critics of the SF movement have called attention to the fact that SF advocates are somehow elitists, in the sense that they promote expensive gastronomic and touristic experiences (Donati, 2004; Laudan, 2004). Moreover, as remarkably pointed out by Chrazan (2004), there seems to be a deep gap between SF intentions and their capacity to actively implement programs to achieve its goals. Despite these arguments Donati (2004) recognises SF capacity to bring together and positively influence individuals from all over the World.

These perspectives have something important to offer to researchers interested in understanding future patterns of agri-food systems. While debates about SF philosophies and ideologies will continue to proliferate, this new approach could contribute to deepen the critical thinking process upon the three main principles of SF - good, clean and fair. Overall, SF movement constitutes an undeniably important milestone towards the promotion of sustainable agri-food systems. However, while acquiescing that through individual choices, everyone can contribute to Good, Clean and Fair agri-food systems, the behaviour is also dictated by individuals' philosophical views, which utterly determines consumers food choices. As Lupton (1996) acknowledged "For many people, eating has become a philosophy, a secular means of attributing meaning and value to everyday practices." To further reconnoitre this perspective, the next section starts by shedding some light on the philosophical approach to food and agri-food systems, particularly the philosophy of the SF movement. This is followed by a comprehensive clarification on the choice of the three dimensions, spirituality, socialization and knowledge, to explore the complementary SF principle – agri-food philosophy.

## 2.2 Philosophical approaches to agri-food systems

Philosophical debates around food-related matters are fairly recent. Despite earlier discussions, albeit subtle, this theme gained momentum in the nineties to the point of being discussed as the 'rise of the Philosophy of Food' (Linares and Meskin, 2021), with the publication of several works such as *Food for thought: Philosophy and food* (Telfer, 1996), *Food, the body and the self* (Lupton, 1996), *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Korsmeyer, 1999) to name a few. In the context of these philosophical debates around food, writings around the SF movement frequently discuss it as "the philosophy of SF" (Jung et al., 2014; Kjørstad, 2017) or as a "coherent philosophy" among different national and local conditions (Andrews, 2008). A review of the literature has led to the conclusion that there is space for a discussion of SF basic tenets, not only centred on the three universal principles of Slow Food - Fair, Clean and Good, but also on a continuous questioning on how philosophical dimensions might be of help to promote sustainable food choices. Slow Food is not exclusively a movement related to gastronomy, but also, a movement that defends and promotes a "*slow philosophy*", of which, gastronomy is only one component (Petrini, personal communication, February 21, 2010).

Although SF principles (good, fair, clean) are claimed to be the building-blocks of the "SF philosophy", the existent academic and non-academic literature on SF is not sufficiently clear on how philosophical arguments unfold to better understand sustainable food choices. This paper advances previous research on the conceptualization of the main principles of the SF movement in order to allow for empirical research (Dias and Nogueira, 2018, 2019), particularly regarding the inclusion of the fourth building-block - the agri-food philosophy – as a principle per se, that also needs to be conceptualized and empirically researched. The proposal to incorporate agri-food philosophy as a SF principle to consider in future debates, encompassing socialization, knowledge and spirituality was supported by exhaustive research on earlier and recent contributions and discussions on the philosophy of food from different fields such as sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies (Cacciolatti and Lee, 2022; Kaplan, 2012; Linares and Meskin, 2021; Sweeney and Kaplan, 2012; Thompson and Kaplan, 2012). The extant literature provides reasonable arguments to strengthen the understanding on how social food practices are heavily rooted on philosophical reflections, emerging from complex processes of socialization, knowledge acquisition and dissemination and individuals' spiritual beliefs. The following sections discusses these dimensions.

### 2.2.1 *Socialization as a dimension of agri-food philosophy*

Socialization represents the process of building and developing the identity of agents, resulting from their immersion in contexts influenced by social, educational, psychological, personal, cultural, emotional and situational factors, throughout life. In line with previous research (Block et al., 2011; Ekström, 2006) socialization, in the context of food choices and consumption, refers to the processes through which consumers learn to consume food in different contexts, together with the development of taste, from childhood throughout their lifetime. The role of learning in lifelong taste development is emphasized through age-appropriate education systems as a means of recognizing, appreciating, and preserving quality food, intrinsically related to the local culture and society (Van Esterik, 2018). Hence, mealtimes and meal settings vary within and across social groups and situations (Ochs and Shoet, 2006). In the same line, and grounded on the institutional logics framework, Furnari (2019) suggests that individuals are socialized into institutional logics through specific social situations in the course of their life (as for example, having meals and sharing food with friends, family or professional situations). Hence, from the viewpoint of institutional logics, defined as 'the material practices and symbolic categories by which humans conduct their material life and give meaning to it' (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999, p. 804), socialization grants cultural and symbolic meaning to food consumption. Moreover, consumers identities' and goals regarding their food choices, are embedded in their own institutional logics, in the sense that they construct their identities from the multiple logics in which they have been socialized depending on the characteristics of the situation (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012).

While this is the case, socialization in the adulthood might also contribute to distance consumers from previous learning processes. Researchers of traditional food systems (Turner and Turner, 2007) have claimed that, as a result of the transformation of food systems around the world, most people have neither time, energy, opportunity or skills to engage in food rituals as before. Therefore, people became distant from their traditional food sources, spending less time in cultural practices dedicated to food harvesting, preparation, distribution or storage. Similarly, to the original arguments behind the creation of the SF movement, Classen (2007) and Turner and Turner (2009) launches an issue of major concern to the debate, claiming that fast-food chains are completely changing social practices around food and destroying any deeply-rooted culture based on food. Classen (2007) further adds that Western cultures are gradually losing respect and concern for food preparation and eating rituals. Using lessons learned from Esquivel (1950), the author calls our attention to the fact that "with this loss, however, also comes a loss of respect for life and spirituality in their crucial components" (p.316.). Accordingly, the following section addresses this issue.

### 2.2.2 *Spirituality as a dimension of agri-food philosophy*

The dimension Spirituality brings the need to reflect on the human propensity to search for the purpose of life, balance, peace of mind and harmony. Regarding the intersection between spirituality and agri-food systems, a vast body of research has been developed in recent years (Bone, 2005; Caldwell, 2007; Classen, 2007; Dias and Nogueira, 2018, 2019; Mcguire, 2003; Parkin, 2011).

The literature opens room to discuss a double significance of food spirituality: on one hand, as the sensation of happiness, peace, harmony and balance with the nature resulting from contact with the earth in the moments of production and preparing food, translated as 'Food for the soul'; on the other hand, the conscious and deliberate decision-making of individuals by foods with 'spiritual qualities' such as the gift of cleansing and purifying the body, trust and safety in food and its producer, and the natural and genuine attributes of taste texture, smell and appearance of food. From one perspective, researchers claim that the ritual and social practices of obtaining, preparing, serving, sharing and eating food may constitute vehicles by which individuals express their spirituality (Bone, 2005; Caldwell, 2007; Classen, 2007; Mcguire, 2003). Bone (2005) for example, in a study on spirituality, food and early childhood education, suggests that social practices around eating, not only feed body and soul, but also provide social interaction, encourage harmony and love for life and more importantly "an opportunity for spiritual renewal" and to connect with a variety of philosophical beliefs (p.316). Germov and Williams (1999) remind us, that food habits are significantly different according to sociocultural and religious/spiritual beliefs variations: "from the sacred cow in India, to kosher-eating among the orthodox Jewish community, to the inclusion of animals such as dogs, horses, and kangaroos on menus in some countries while they serve as pets in another. (p. 1)". A complementary perspective is that wellbeing and health, whereas physical, mental, emotional and spiritual is almost impossible to achieve and maintain without permanent vigilance on food consumption (Lupton, 1996, p. 87). Nath (2010) presents a rich set of qualitative findings that demonstrate the importance of recognising the relationships between food, health, social life and philosophical and spiritual beliefs in the Indian spectrum. Hence, each culture has treated food rituals in different manners, but always as a key cultural element that is embedded with reverend, ritualistic and religious dimensions (Classen, 2007).

The SF movement has also been debated from the viewpoint of spirituality. Laudan (2004) in her provocative review on SF movement, remind us the words of Sonnenfeld, culinary historian, according to whom SF allows to reflect on the table as an 'altar' "that offers the template for the preservation of human rights and the environment." (Sonnenfeld cit in Laudan, 2004, p. 135). Or Batali, chef, writer, restaurateur, who claimed that SF movement is "far more spiritual, nay, religious, than any club (or religion, for that matter) I have been asked to join" (Batali cit in Laudan, 2004, p. 135). On a

less positive perspective, Turner and Turner (2007) presages that the spiritual aspects of food are being lost and further add that “without spiritual context and protocols for food (...) it is impossible to maintain traditions of food use” (p.64). Linked to this challenge, the third dimension brings the need to safeguard valuable and cumulative knowledge regarding food production, distribution, and consumption.

### 2.2.3 Knowledge as a dimension of agri-food philosophy

Knowledge encompasses a decision process to make conscious and informed choices about food, or as suggested by Lupton (1996), 'intelligent' choices. Hence, is here conceptualized, not as a static dimension, but as a dynamic and cumulative learning process of converting information on agri-food systems into active behaviour, that is to say, the long-term development of motivational attitudes and skills, to research, understand, evaluate, and compare information on food that the individual chooses to consume, in the guarantee of health and quality of life. Hence, higher level of knowledge regarding food-related matters results in more personal responsibility assumed by the consumers in their purchasing and consumption processes (Hempel et al., 2022). On the other hand, it also depends on how they acquire and interpret knowledge from a variety of different sources, especially from food brands and retailers. In this sense, the development of consumers' knowledge, is very much dependent on the transparency of communication provided by the food value chain, as well as the communication channels more suitable to reach consumers. Hence, retailers are required to provide transparent messages to better support consumers' decision making process regarding food choices (Schiefer et al., 2013).

Knowledge dissemination and learning processes within agriculture and agri-food sectors, have been pointed out as a key element of agricultural innovation system (Spendrup and Fernqvist, 2019) but also a building-block to understand the concept of the Philosophy of food. According to Linares and Muskin (2021), a further sign of the development of the field of Philosophy of food is precisely the enterprise of producing and disseminating knowledge about food-related matters in schools and universities and the publication of textbooks designed for teaching this subject in higher education institutions, at the undergraduate level, namely Kaplan's work (Kaplan, 2012, 2019). Recalling Telfer's (1996) argument, if art is taught by educators since childhood and if “food at its best deserves to be treated as a simple art form” (p. 56), then knowledge about food should be acquired in the context of the educational system, from childhood to adulthood. Kaplan's book (2012), *Food Philosophy*, provided an important discussion on the philosophical dimensions of agri-food systems, from production and distribution to consumption. The author elucidates the reader in relation to key questions linked to metaphysics (what is food), epistemology (how we experience food), ethics (how we should make and eat food), aesthetics (what taste in food is), political philosophy (how governments should regulate food) and existentialism (why food matters to us how it affects our identities).

The SF movement grants pivotal importance to the immense wealth of knowledge that is produced and transmitted over time and space. Keeping memory and transmitting this knowledge from generation to generation is an effective method for not repeating mistakes already made, but also a primary condition for discovering new frontiers and new opportunities (Petrini, 2005, 2006). Slow Food's founder believes that it is only through dialogue, dialectics and the exchange between academic and traditional Knowledge, that one can imagine a sustainable future. Recent discussions on the role of SF in preserving and disseminating knowledge claim that social innovation derives from how collective knowledge in a population arises from communities of practice and experience exchange (Cacciolatti and Lee, 2022). This goes hand-in-hand with the premise that embracing Slow Food principles allows to safeguard traditional knowledge.

## 3 Methodological Approach

Following previous work (Dias and Nogueira, 2018), this study employed the Delphi method to reach conclusions regarding the prediction of agri-food trends in Portugal in a 10 years' time frame. This paper reports on the results of one such trend - Agri-food philosophy as SF principle to explore when discussing the future of agri-food systems. Given the complexity of the research problem, this method was deemed relevant and adequate, in the sense that it provides means for forecasting trends, based on a series of questionnaires, where opinions, judgments and feedback from experts are retrieved and analysed (Brady, 2015; Gupta and Clarke, 1996; Hanafin, 2004). Moreover, the method has been quite adopted in agri-food research, for example, to foresee the role of blockchain in traceability management in the agri-food sector (Aldrighetti et al., 2021), to assess the sustainability of food systems and diets in the Mediterranean area (Allen et al., 2019), to forecast scenarios of the fresh tomato industry in Italy and in Germany (Bazzani and Canavari, 2013), to produce a sustainability assessment tool to integrated food/non-food systems (Mullender et al., 2020), to assess country-of-origin labelling for processed foods (Su and Canavari, 2018), to forecast technology and innovation in southern Europe's agri-food sector (Archontakis and Anastasiadis, 2019), to name a few. The following sections justifies this methodological decision, the criteria to select the panel of experts and the procedures to implement the rounds of questionnaires.

### 3.1 The Delphi Method

The Delphi approach has been employed in a vast range of studies since the publication of seminal works, namely from Dalkey and Helmer (1963) and Linstone and Turoff (1975). The method was first used in technological forecasting studies initiated by RAND (Research and Development) Corporation for the American military in 1944, and is considered as a long-term forecasting technique based on the collective opinion and experience of a panel of experts (Gupta and Clarke, 1996). However, in its primary and original form, the Delphi method was mentioned and recognized by ancient Greece through the ancient oracle at Delphi, which gave visions about the future to those who sought advice (Gupta and Clarke, 1996).

Defined as "a method of structuring an effective group communication process, allowing that group of individuals to deal with a complex problem as a whole" (Linstone and Turoff, 1975, p. 3), it contributes with a structured tool to obtain opinions, insights and perspectives from experts on a specific topic, issue or theme to better inform decision making (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963). Albeit differently framed as a method (Linstone and Turoff, 1975) or a forecasting procedure (Broomfield and Humphries, 2001; Rogers and Lopez, 2002), the main goal is to work on a divergence of opinions, towards convergence, without external influences or biases. As suggested by Linstone and Turoff, (1975), the method is suitable when the problem does not lend itself to precise analytical techniques but can benefit from subjective judgments on a collective basis" (p. 4). In practice, the Delphi method can be referred to as an alternative to formal meetings, interviews or other face-to-face interactions. Unlike meetings, where it is often difficult for everyone to be present, the Delphi method allows all participants to have the same opportunity to be involved in decision making.

### 3.2 Data source: panel selection criteria

The Delphi panel was constituted according to three basic criteria: i) professional origins, ii) connection with trends and iii) innovation and involvement in the agri-food sector chain. Additionally, the profile of each selected member was carefully scrutinised to support the decision process. There is no predetermined optimal number of experts in Delphi studies. According to Powell (2003) the representativeness of the panel is based on the quality of the experts rather than the number experts. The panel comprises 24 national experts (Table 1), from the public, academic and private sectors, in order to safeguard the representativeness of each sector.

**Table 1.**  
*National Panel Experts.*

National Panel Experts (N = 24)			
Sector	Representativeness		Selection criteria
	Number of Experts	%	
Private	15	62.5	- Connections with business trends in the agri-food industry. - Scientific publications concerning the issue. - Professional managing positions - Policy makers.
Academic	6	25	
Public	3	12.5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>	

### 3.3 Procedures

The present study entailed the development of three rounds of inquiry implemented in different time sets, and targeting diverse, but complementary purposes. Figure 1 represents the overall structure of the research process and implemented procedures. The pre-round intended to assess the degree of self-knowledge of each expert regarding a set of statements previously defined for each dimension of the agri-food philosophy (see annex I) and obtain new ideas and arguments to prepare the final statements to include in the questionnaires of the following rounds.

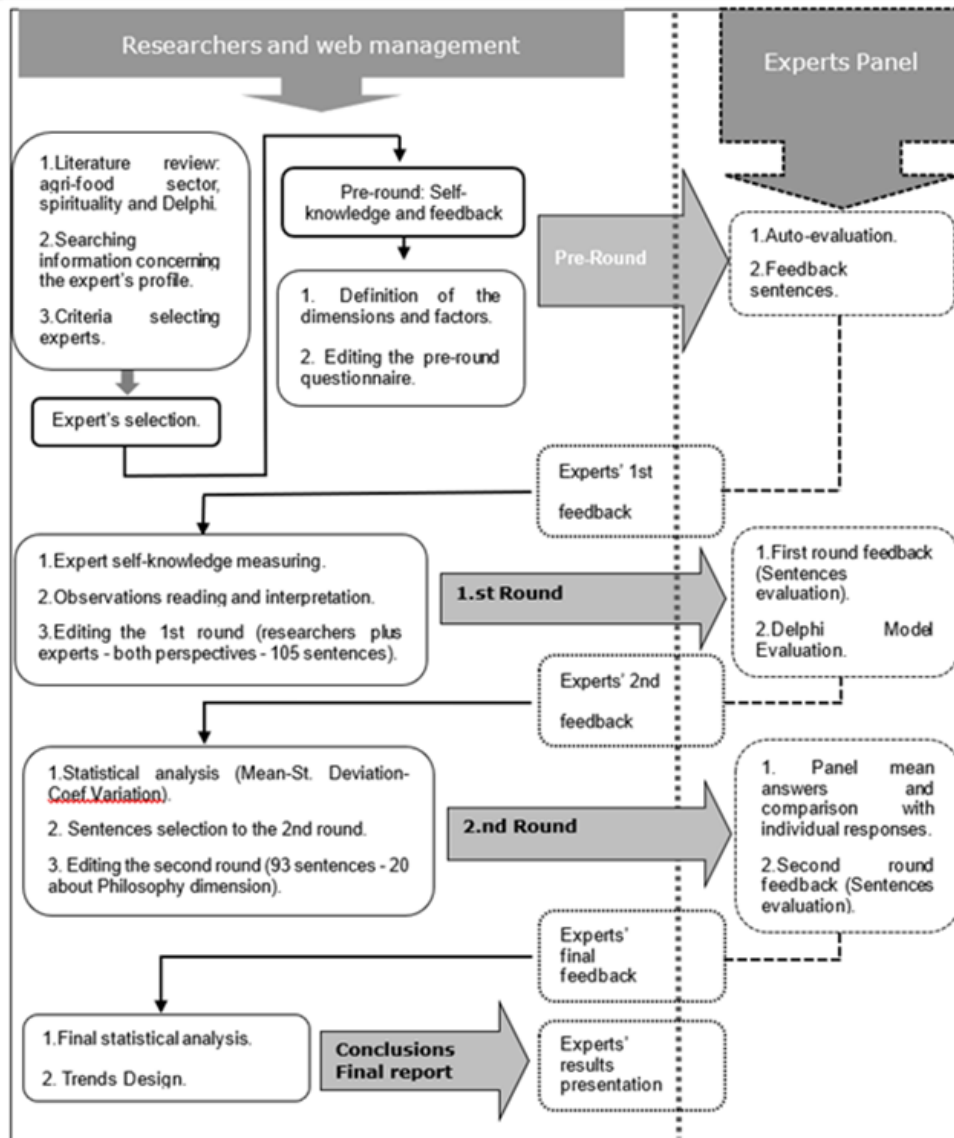


Figure 1: Delphi structure design.

Experts' opinions and positions regarding the proposed dimensions were explored through a 5-point Likert scale to measure their degree of agreement or disagreement towards the statements comprising the dimensions. Based on Corbetta (2007) this scale is suitable to measure attitudes, due to its simple structure which is normally represented by a series of individual statements on which the experts must answer demonstrating the degree of agreement or disagreement.

Data analysis was both qualitative and quantitative. Firstly, a qualitative content analysis was employed to the comments, opinions and experience shared by the members of the Delphi panel. Secondly, a quantitative analysis of the experts' responses was performed based on statistical measures - arithmetic mean, standard deviation and coefficient of variation. The quantitative analysis, as in many Delphi studies, uses descriptive statistics to determine the position of the answers and to quantify the consensus degree (Mili and Zúñiga, 2001; Toppinen et al., 2017). The mean was the statistical trend measure defined for the central responses. In line with Saldanha and Gray (2002), the level of consensus - agreement or disagreement - was defined as a percentage higher than the average percentage of the majority of opinions (above 50%).

To understand the level of agreement of the participants, two statistics of dispersion were performed: standard deviation and the coefficient of variation (CV). The consensus is reached if the CV - which is the ratio between the standard deviation and the mean, is less than a predefined result. In contrast, the statements with less consensus were included in the succeeding round for the experts' re-evaluation. In Delphi literature it is commonly accepted that an

equal or below 0.5, must be the indicator of agreement (Mili and Zúñiga, 2001). Table 2 presents the scales used in this study regarding the degree of consensus.

**Table 2.**  
Degree of consensus.

Degree of Consensus		
Range of CV	Consensus Position	Round Decision
$CV \leq 0.15$	Very high degree of consensus	Accepted. Second Round
$0.16 < CV \leq 0.3$	Medium degree of consensus	Accepted. Second Round
$0.31 < CV \leq 1$	Very low degree of consensus	Rejected. Third Round

Furthermore, and as suggested by Dajani et al. (1979), to test the stability of the answers some control was made to check for changes in the relative coefficient of variation between successive rounds.

### 3.3.1 First round/pre-round

The goals of the first round, also called as pre-round, were twofold. On one hand, it aimed at evaluating the degree of self-knowledge of each member concerning the dimensions and factors proposed in the Delphi Model regarding the Agri-food Philosophy (spirituality, socialization, and knowledge). For this purpose, a total of 20 statements about this dimension were proposed and discussed (See annex). On the other hand, and supported by the Delphi literature, this preround was also designed to collect contributions and opinions from all experts, in order to improve the construction of sentences included in the final questionnaire. To do so, each panellist was invited to share their perspectives and free opinions by filling an "observations box".

### 3.3.2 Second round and first feedback

In the second round, an email with an individual link was sent for each panellist. All members were asked to discuss, and send feedback, on the set of sentences, based on their opinions regarding agreement or disagreement. The descriptive analysis above mentioned (mean and standard deviation as central and deviation statistics), was performed to the answers collected from this round. To decide upon which sentences should be part of the succeeding questionnaire to be sent on the third round, the coefficient of variation was used. In addition, it is important to mention that no substantial differences were observed in the coefficient of variation between the second and third rounds, with many items showing a change in CV of less than 15%, which meets the stability criterion suggested by Dajani et al. (1979), thus allowing to conclude the process. The cut-off points for the second round was set between 0.3 and 0.1 to build a stronger final consensus. The decision to use these stricter selection criteria was because the study was about long-term trends, phenomena predictions and unknown subjects. The experts were invited to compare each individual answer with the panel mean. If the difference between the individual opinion and the panel's average opinion was high, all experts had to justify why they would adjust or not, the opinions. In this case, the idea was to capture some differences from the average, but at the same time, to grasp their very valid opinions.

### 3.3.3 Third round and validation of final feedback

The last round allowed to conclude that the level of the standard deviation was less when compared with the previous round, from 1.0 to 0.8 respectively. Hence, one of the objectives of the Delphi methodology was confirmed given that the study started with a considerably higher standard deviation than the final analysis, reinforcing that the opinions at the beginning were more diverse than at the end of the research - from disperse to converge opinions. In this final analysis, all the sentences were re-evaluated concerning the coefficient of variation in order to choose what kind of Portuguese agri-food trends could be underlined and accepted to analyse.

## 4 Results and discussion

This section presents the main results obtained to validate the new principle of Agri-food Philosophy, based on the coefficient of variation. The section is organised according each factor – socialization, spirituality and knowledge.



#### 4.1 Validating Socialization as a Philosophy Principle of the SF framework

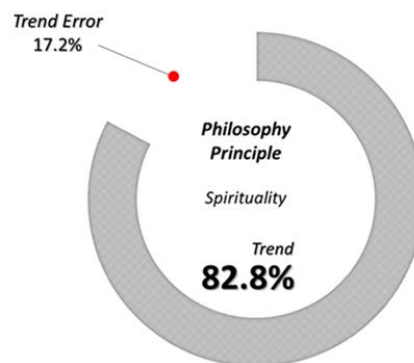
The main trends encountered by all experts for the new SF principle proposed in the model - Agri-Food Philosophy, point out that in the case of the factor Socialization, the sentences about "Training of taste" and "Food wise" based on traditions and artisans know-how, will encourage consumers to recognise and value the importance of *being at the table* as a pathway to promote happiness, pleasure and leisure, confirming the argument from Pietrykowski (2004). Graph 1 confirms this trend by revealing a strong consensus of 89.4% between the experts. Nevertheless, 10.6% of the experts do not envisage this trend as a possibility in the future 10 years' time-frame.



Graph 1: Validation of the factor Socialization

#### 4.2 Validating Spirituality as a Philosophy Principle of the SF framework

Regarding the inclusion of spirituality as a new trend, in 2027 the agri-food systems will face the possibility to understand the meaning, importance and influence of spirituality, in the decision process of food-related matters. This includes, and will observe growing relevance, in all activities that involve cultivating (connecting with soil and nature), buying (critical thinking at the purchasing moment), preparation (direct relation with the ingredients - sensations) and share food at the table (conviviality). All these aspects together can be considered as an equilibrium between body and soul as mentioned by Lupton (1996) or even Petrini (personal communication, February 21, 2010) when he claimed that: "Food is not exclusively a movement related to gastronomy, but also, a movement that defended and promotes a *Slow philosophy*", of which gastronomy is only one component", probably the best balance of the human being. As revealed in Graph 2, this trend has 82.8% of possibilities of occurrence during the period of analysis and the error trend is 17.2%, a bit higher than the last one. However, it will be very important to underline that this subject in discussion - philosophy (socialization, spirituality and knowledge) are unknown for almost agri-food stakeholders and above all, is a very complex one.



Graph 2: Validation of the factor Spirituality.

#### 4.3 Validating Knowledge as a Philosophy Principle of the SF framework

Regarding the third and final factor - Knowledge - results indicate that it will be possible to design and practice a new standard of conduct to be assumed by all agri-food stakeholders based on new values: transparency (from raw materials to consumption) and true marketing information. Graph 3 reveals that this trend can occur at 88.9% until 2027, reinforcing the arguments put forward by Dias and Alas (2016) and Dias and Nogueira (2019).



Graph 3: Validation of the factor Knowledge.

## 5. Conclusions

Building upon existing research on the Slow Food Movement, this research allowed to conclude that there is space to reflect on the importance of philosophical standpoints to forecast trends in future agri-food systems. The Delphi study enabled the validation of the agri-food philosophy as a complementary dimension of the SF building blocks (good, clean, fair). Hence, within this new principle, different trends of socialization, spirituality and knowledge were identified, debated and endorsed by a panel of 24 experts. Recalling Linares and Meskin (2021) recognition that “despite the existence of some philosophical discussions of food, it cannot be said that there has been, at least recently, a clear and distinct domain of the philosophy of food” (p. 4). Therefore, this paper contributes to shed light on the importance of such discussion and suggests a three-dimensional perspective of the philosophy of food. Such perspective might stimulate serious and deeply critical thinking about the current state of agri-food systems and can contribute to help and develop new research approaches, on the need to promote changes, not only in lifestyles and food consumption, but mainly in establishing and improving more transparency in all types of agri-food systems.

Additionally, with this new reflection, more researchers on agri-food fields, might be inspired to embrace philosophical and spiritual approaches to food practices to contest the loss of food control, strengthening local farmers and local markets, promote circular economy models, stimulate proximity between producers and consumers by investing in shorts channels and new ways of using the technology to reinforce the SF agri-food system. At the end of the day, what lies behind this movement is the belief that “we are all food”. It is very important to promote small markets at the local basis, stimulating the proximity from producers with consumers.

Regarding the implications of this study for business, the forecasting trends identified for the next ten years, allowed to predict that moving from a food wild consumerism basis, to an ethical, Philosophical and transparent one, will be possible, but at slow pace. At the individual and collective level, this study contributes to reinforce the need to understand concepts like for example “Hygge” (Søderberg, 2016), associated with the relationship of food. Concepts and terms such as cosiness, bliss, happiness, share, ethics, appreciation, philosophy, simplicity, comfort, gratitude, warmth, should be trained with food, nature, and people, from kindergarten level until senior stage. The importance of slow food moments and the new proposed and approved Philosophical principle, is both bold and humble - it is the ultimate feel-good and wisdom food dimension.

Paradoxically and after several warnings, the “natural resources-biodiversity or lack thereof” will prevent the maintenance of the global current consumption patterns and agri-food and forestry waste. The global per capita food consumption must be reduced. The climate, the food and the table, will form an equation of balance, which will force new consumer standards. Simultaneously, the agri-food stakeholders will face new values associated with food: well-being in the sense of spirituality, and more food respect, as well as ethics, transparency, and truth at marketing level. In the next ten years there will be an expectation around the “food table”, which will gain more importance as a basis of socialization, respect for the producer and territory, and will tend to be more spiritual, propitiating individual or collective moments.

In terms of limitations of the research, it can be underlined that only Delphi experts from the Portuguese context were inquired. It would be relevant to replicate the Delphi structure design employed in this study, in other socio-cultural contexts, that would to produce new knowledge and means for comparison across different regions. Additionally, it

would be stimulating to explore the philosophic principle with other profiles of panellists such as anthropologists, philosophers, economists, and ecologists. Hopefully, this paper might trigger some inquisitiveness regarding such a complex and subjective theme, such as the philosophy of food. Particularly, it might contribute to encourage new research on the key role played by spirituality, socialization and knowledge to inform more sustainable relations at different levels of agri-food value chains.

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**Annex**

**Table.**  
Philosophy dimension statements.

<b>Factor: Socialization</b>
The appreciation of food will go through "taste training" and the "sage figure" traditions and artisans.
The people and artisanal manufacturing processes will be more valuable in 2027 than the price.
By 2027, "food table" talk will be given more importance as an educational vehicle than technology
Sitting at the table with family and friends will be synonymous of identity, beliefs, and cultural affirmation.
<b>Factor: Spirituality</b>
Food associated with physical exercise and meditation will be, in 2027, the most important axes to achieve harmony of being
Food in 2027 will be valued through associated beliefs
The "divine taste" will be contextualized in terms of consumption perception in 2027.
The spirituality of food will be related to its origin.
Fasting, Ramadan and other human practices and behaviors (Kosher, Halal rituals) will gain food relevance, in addition to the associated religiosity or divine worship and devotion that they may represent. eg purification/detoxification of the organism.
The spirituality of food and nutrition in Portugal will be perceived in 2027, through the balance between GOOD, CLEAN and FAIR food.
Agri-food and forestry identity of each country will be linked in 2027 with spirituality, religion and belief.
Emotional states will be widely perceived as purchase drivers.
Through food and nourishment, Religion expresses its beliefs.
The expectation of the moment associated with Sunday lunch, after an act of devotion, alone or in a group, is the greatest testimony of happiness that a human being can experience.
<b>Factor: Knowledge</b>
The degree and depth of knowledge about food production and cooking methods will determine the purchase.
The Portuguese consumer will have access to the truth (set of processes) of each food value chain: plant and animal through agri-food co-creation.
Agri-food marketing and forestry will have a standard of conduct assumed by all stakeholders that privileges total transparency and access to information.
In 2027 Portugal will have a Faculty of agri-food and sea gastronomy sciences.
Alchemy will be incorporated in 2027 in the sciences of nature and food in its two aspects; nutrition - chemistry and philosophy of food.