

# Sociology of food in usa



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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Man and food have close association with one another and this association has also compelled the man to find new means and new forms of food, to bring diversity and sustainability in their food chain. Initially the food was only grown like vegetables and fruits or was got, in the form of meat, of hunting animals. With the progress in civilization and the technology, all phenomenon of production, distribution and consumption changed and with this change raised the issue like health, ethical, environmental, labor and the cultural. When these issues came into focus, the whole scenario brought the field of sociology of food. This field helps to study how the food is currently produced, then goes to the line of distribution and how the people around the country or the world consume it. Along with all other factors, this whole process of food chain also has the social impact and this impact can affect the society in a number of ways. Here, we will discuss the sociology of food in USA and how it is creating social problems.

### 2. OBJECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE SOCIAL CONDITION

In the countries like America, it is not an ancient thought that food used to be cooked at home and was considered as the item that connects the family together and helps them to sit together and interact with each other. It was once the preference that food should be prepared at home and the preparation of food itself required a lot of fresh ingredients and specially loves. After the industrial revolution, along with other concepts, the idea of food as the bonding force also changed. Industrial revolution not only increased the speed of progress in science and technology, but also, altered <https://assignbuster.com/sociology-of-food-in-usa/>

the pace of life. Industrial revolution also gave the opportunity to work, therefore, most of the members of the family started working. People became busy in earning money and cooking meals at home became difficult for the people and as a result the food industry progressed to an extent that it has taken the place in every home of United States. Food production, distribution and consumption have become one of the biggest industries not only in United States, but, all over the world.

### 3. SUBJECTIVE PRESENTATION OF WHY THE SOCIAL CONDITION IS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

Although we are now living in the society which revolves around becoming self-sufficient and economically stable, therefore, people have to spend more time at workplaces, thus, decreasing the time people used to spend their time. Most of that time was centered on making and feeding family members. The abundance of readymade food including: fast food drinks and junk food provided a lot of solutions for the people. Food is an important source to create connections and it is considered that cooking and serving proper meals reestablishes and reinforces the bond between different members of the family and helps them to spend time with one another (Debevec and Tivadar). Taking, cooking of food out of our daily lives is causing a lot of social issues, that dominating our way of living and relationships.

#### *Food Production*

Five decades back, the production of food had never been an issue. Countries usually depended on their own main crops to meet the needs of

their population, but, with the passes of time, transportation, technology, wealth and prosperity of some countries gave those changes to get more and better food for their population. One example is that Asian countries are acquiring land in African countries. This method of production, in foreign countries is to meet the increasing need of the Asian countries to fulfill the demand of the food, due to increase in population in urban areas. This will not only create social issue for the people of African countries, but, also in the countries this food is consumed because the excessive export of the crops of African countries will put pressure on the society because people will not be able to benefit from their own land, thus creating social distress. Also, the people in Asian countries, who will be consuming those products, will have to pay more for it due to increase in cost due to transportation. Thus, a social divide will occur because people of middle and lower classes will have to pay more, even beyond their means, to get the articles of basic need (Gunasekera and Finnigan). Secondly, with the advancement of technology, transgenic technology is used to genetically modified crops or the improved crops. This technology is used all over the world, but, still there are societies which consider them against their beliefs and system. There are societies who collectively think that producing food by introducing foreign agent into the original form might have negative impact on the health of the people and the originality of the crops. People believe that since all the crops grown naturally are the best form of the food and it is not for the benefit of society to genetically enhance the food and increase production, which might compromise the health of the people, which will ultimately reflect on society (Akumo and Riedel). Thirdly, sustainability has also become an important issue in food production. With increase in population, demand of

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dietary products and meat has increased and in order to meet the needs several scientific methods are used. Eight hundred million people in the world are suffering from malnutrition, whereas, nearly four hundred million people are obese. The increase in prosperity and population has increased the demand of these products, but, in order to raise more meat giving animals, more water and food for them is needed. This causes an imbalance in the environment because there is already scarcity of the water and the food of these animals need to grow and this excessive requirement compels humans to use unnatural ways to grow food and even increase the speed of growth of animals. Demand of these food items has increased, but, so does their price and the prices of these products are getting out of reach of common people, especially in underdeveloped countries. This also creates social imbalance and the working class again has to suffer due to lack of finances. (Reisch and Eberle)

### *Food Distribution*

Food distribution systems work as the network and distribute food products all over the country. The supply of food actually depends on the demand of the product in a certain area, but, certain food items are produced that may be demanded in different markets comprising of variety of social classes and this difference in social status may also affect the availability of the product. The availability of these products is also dependent on the purchasing power of the customer. There the distribution is also affected by this, thus making these products unavailable to the lower class (FAO). The main issue associated with the distribution systems is that there are very few number of markets that sell their products locally. Since, these products are sent to

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other towns and cities, thus increasing the price of the product. The excessive spending on distribution and the money spent on advertising is received from the consumer, which again impacts the working class of the society (Martinez, Hand and Pra). The people who used to come at the churches pantry to get food have increased three times since 2008. But, the amount of food that was distributed to these services has decreased due to decrease in budget. Thus this uneven supply of food to these church services have put the pressure to the churches to feed the peed that are deserving and are dependent on them. Uneven distribution of food and makes people unable to purchase their own food (Greenberg, Greenberg and Mazza).

### *Food Consumption*

The consumption of the food is greatly influenced by the income of the consumer. The families that have better income spend a lot of money on food and especially on fancy and expensive food items. Therefore, a social divide is also created and the food items are produced which can only be consumed by the people who are financially stable (Jappelli and Pistaferri). Due to busy lifestyles the eating out and consuming readymade food is increasing rapidly in the country. Although, research show that the food that is made and eaten at home has good health and social effects. At the dinner table, family get the chance to interact with each other, develop better relationship and come to know about lives of one another, thus creating better family bond and increasing harmony in the society (Eisenberg, Olson and Neumark-Sztainer). Since the people consume a lot of food outside, therefore, their choice of food is also affected by the people around them. People who eat at the public places usually eat unhealthy and fatty food and

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most of the times they spend more money, than their average spending, this results in compromised health and finances. The obese and financially unstable people further affects the balance of the society (Mcferran, Dahl and Fitzsimons).

#### 4. SOCIAL CHANGE

Food production industry has changed its shaped since last eight decades and now everything that was considered the specialty of home foods come in packing. Income has increased the demand for expensive food items and the food market has become global. All these factors are affecting the society because transportation from far off places makes, even the most common things expensive, thus making it expensive for major portion of society. This problem can be reduced by introduced more local markets and by promoting local products. Moreover, alternative products to protein like second level protein should be encouraged and produced, to meet the needs of the people. Pulses can also serve as the alternative source for protein; therefore, producing this item can help in achieving sustainability in food chain.

Food distribution has always been the issue all over the world, but, now we come to see even the global distribution of food. Now even the food of Sydney can reach any part of the world. Still there are countries that are facing uneven distribution of food resulting on malnutrition. Uneven distribution is also due to the uneven incomes of different segments of the society. Also different markets have different prices of same item and even. This problem can be solved by introducing centralized distribution system and centralized pricing. These systems can even help the working class to afford all things and everything can become available to everyone,

irrespective of the social class. Also, this centralized system will be helpful in ensuring that every member of the society is equally treated and has access to everything he needs.

The consumption of food can only be controlled by the consumer. The most important should be the health of the customer, for which customer should take balanced diet and this diet could help to give better and healthy people to the society. People should also, consider the effect of decrease in family meal on their social and family life.. There should be balance in work and family life and the increase in social distress can be caused if this balance is disturbed. Although, it is easier and simpler to get the food from restaurants, but, restaurants cannot compensate for the love of the family and communication with family members. Also, most of the times, the food consumed outside is unhealthy and unhygienic, that can result in a health issue, will demand money for seeing a physician and will put extra pressure on the finances. The government should also conduct awareness programs about the importance of meals made at home and the significance of balanced diet.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Sociology of food is an important topic and sociology of food in USA is also. Three different aspects of food chain: production, distribution and consumption. There are a number of social issues in all three aspects and the most prominent ones are due to uneven income of different segments of the society. So, in order to meet the most common needs of all the people, it is important to have if not centralized then controlled system that can



ensure that all markets have same price. Moreover, the consumption of the food should also be according to the needs of the body and excessive or unbalanced. A lot work has to be done to the sociology of food in United States in all three areas i.. e production, distribution and consumption.

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