

How COVID-19 Pandemic Contingency Measures Impacted on Environmental Practices in Food Service in Portugal

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Abstract : Considering the growing trend of food consumption outside the home, Food Service units (FSU) achieved importance and responsibility in feeding the population. FSU have a strong environmental impact since the large-scale production of meals implies a high use of resources and produce high amounts of waste with economic and environmental consequences. At the end of 2019, with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, this effort towards sustainability was affected by the contingency measures imposed to stop the spread of the virus. Preventive measures in FSU, include the provision of cutlery and paper napkins in individual bags, the use of disposable paper towels, the supply of individual portions of bread and spices, as well as bottled water. These measures are, in many cases, a setback and an obstacle to the implementation of more sustainable practices and imply greater consumption of natural resources and materials. The present study aimed to assess the impact of the implementation of the contingency measures for the Covid-19 pandemic on the environmental practices of FSU in Portugal. A questionnaire was developed to characterize the FSU and the impact of the implementation of contingency measures for the Covid-19 pandemic. A great impact of the implementation of the contingency measures in the sustainability of FSU was observed, highlighting concerns about the need to keep these measures, some of them adopted due to fear of the unknown and its consequences on an ongoing successful process. Policymakers should keep only the ones that may prove to be efficient and positive and abandon or relieve the unnecessary ones.

Keywords : COVID-19, environment, food service, sustainability, SGD

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