




What is a sustainable diet? Is it attainable?

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“Sustainable diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources.”

FAO, 2010, Sustainable Diets and Biodiversity.



Unsustainable diets

- Population 9 billion 2050
- Growing middle class
- Desire for "western" diet and lifestyle
- Over 900 million people suffer from hunger
- 1.5 billion overweight or obese
- Estimated 2 billion micronutrient malnutrition

Impact on health

- Reduction in plant based diets in developing economies in favour of diets rich in meat, dairy, sugar and fat.
- Poor diets linked to increases in diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.
- Refined carbohydrates and fats
- Over simplification of diets
- Reliance on a limited number of energy rich foods.
- Foods that lack nutrient quality
- Cheap, energy dense food – loss of diversity, flavour

Western diets have a heavy footprint

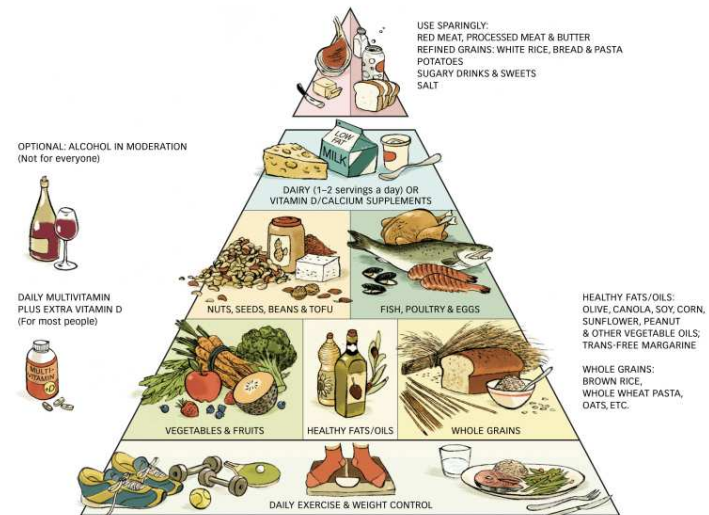
- Three major staple crops – corn, wheat, rice provide 60% of dietary energy (plant sources)
- Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation
- Heavy carbon and water footprint.
- Pressure on resources
- Sustainable food systems are critical for achieving healthy, sustainable diets.
- Amount of waste in food system is significant in ensuring we can feed our growing population.
- Different diets have different environmental and health impacts.

What is the usual advice?

- Eat more plants
- Waste less food
- Eat less meat
- Eat less processed food
- Eat certified food

THE HEALTHY EATING PYRAMID

Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health



Meat vs plant-based

Meat

- Significant impact on climate
- Large water consumption and land use
- Land unsuitable for production can be used for livestock.
- Some meat consumption can be of benefit to biodiversity and local communities.

Plant based

- Lower GHG emissions
- Not all land suitable for growing crops.
- Water use for irrigation can be an issue.
- Soil erosion can be an issue.
- 100% vegan may not be the way to go.