



GIANT LEAPS



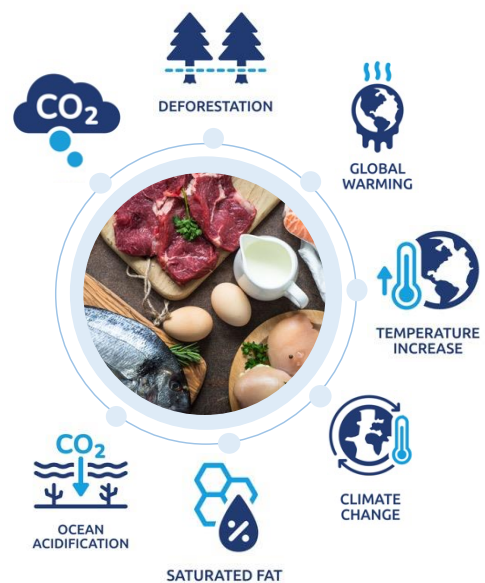
The dietary shift: Towards a healthier and sustainable food system

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Problem

A diet too high in animal-based products, e.g., (red) meat and dairy foods, has a negative impact on both our environment and our health. The production of meat and dairy causes large amounts of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, including carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane and nitrous oxide. These gases harm the environment and contribute to climate change. In addition, livestock farming requires a lot of land, water, and energy. Most of the world's agricultural land is used for livestock feed production, with serious consequences such as deforestation and biodiversity loss. Furthermore, the modern, industrial way in which meat is produced to meet current consumption levels comes at the expense of animal welfare.



Solution

A transition from animal-based to plant-based foods – the dietary shift – is necessary to reduce the environmental impact of our diet and create a more sustainable food system. The production of plant-based proteins directly for human consumption requires significantly fewer resources and causes less damage to the environment compared to the production of animal-based proteins. Moreover, plant-based foods are generally lower in saturated fatty acids and cholesterol, and are high in fiber, antioxidants, and phytochemicals, which have been associated to numerous health benefits. Reducing our meat and dairy consumption and replacing them more often with more sustainable foods such as legumes, whole grains, nuts, and vegetables, will reduce the carbon footprint of our diets while improving our health.





Benefits

The dietary shift has impactful benefits to environmental and human health.

Healthy planet

- Less pollution and GHG emissions
- Limited degradation of land and fresh water sources
- Reduced carbon footprint
- More efficient energy and water use

Healthy people

- Plant-based foods have a high nutritional value
- Reduced risks of cardiovascular disease and inflammation
- Improved gut microbiome health

Practical recommendations

How can you contribute to a healthier and sustainable food system?

To make a positive impact on the environment and your own health does not mean you have to switch to a 100% plant-based diet. Small changes in your diet can already make a big difference. Here are some recommendations and strategies that might help you to change your dietary habits in accordance with the dietary shift:

Eat less meat and dairy

The easiest way to reduce your meat and dairy consumption is by eating less of it. You can do this for example by reducing the portion size, implementing meat-free days, or limiting your meat consumption to weekends or restaurants only.

Enjoy a healthy and varied diet

Last but not least, it is important to include a wide variety of healthy foods in your diet. Try to limit highly processed foods and include healthy foods such as whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and prioritize plant-based fats and proteins. Enjoy and experience with new recipes together with friends and family!

Substitute meat and dairy for plant-based alternatives

There are many ways to transform your favourite dishes into plant-based meals, and it is tasty and healthy too! How about swapping ground beef for black beans at your next taco night? Or ordering curry with tofu instead of chicken for Thai take-away? And have you already tried to replace your regular milk coffee with an Oat Latte?



Further information

Further readings

[The EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health](#) – Can we feed a future population of 10 billion people a healthy diet within planetary boundaries?

Videos

[Is Meat Really that Bad?](#) (00:00 until 10:12)

Source: YouTube

Created by Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell

[Which type of milk is best for you?](#)

Source: TED-Ed

Created by Jonathan J. O'Sullivan & Grace E. Cunningham

Weblinks

About this practice abstract and GIANT LEAPS

This practice abstract was developed in GIANT LEAPS project based on the EIP AGRI abstract format.



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