

Dietary recommendations for reducing environmental impacts  
and improving sustainability

**Dietary Recommendations from the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and Food Climate Research Network**

“There is increasing evidence that dietary patterns with low environmental impacts are also healthier. Common features of such diets are:

- the diversity of foods eaten
- a balance between energy intake and energy expenditure
- the inclusion of minimally processed tubers and whole grains along with legumes, fruit and vegetables
- meat, if eaten, in moderate quantities.
- healthy diets also feature dairy products in moderation, unsalted seeds and nuts, small quantities of fish and aquatic products, and very limited intake of processed foods that are high in fat, sugar or salt and low in micronutrients”

**The British Government Buying Standards** add further positive recommendations about priorities for sourcing more sustainable food -

- Seasonal produce
- Seafood from sustainable sources
- Fairly traded produce
- Food produced to high environmental standards, such as organic or integrated production (eg LEAF - Linked Environment and Farming)
- High animal welfare
- UK or equivalent production standards

**Glaring opportunities (!) to decrease emissions and achieve a more sustainable food and drink system:**

- Decrease waste food.
- Decrease waste of energy.
- Switch to a 100% renewable energy supplier. Install own renewable energy generation.
- Urgent need for non-farmland sourced "green" alternatives to gas, electricity, diesel and petrol.
- Decrease transport emissions.
- Avoid: air-freighted foods and “thirsty” products from regions of water stress.
- Decrease excess packaging.
- Replace some drinks during the day with tap water. Use a refillable water bottle when out, rather than buying bottled drinks.
- Improve ability of soils to act as a sink for greenhouse gases - choose food, if possible, that has been produced without, or with minimal, chemicals, and organic matter levels in soil are at good levels (regenerative/agroecological and nature-friendly production).

- Buy from producers or outlets that you trust.
- Reduce pressure on land use, including (urgently) drivers for land use change such as loss of land rights for small farmers and destruction of rainforest and other sensitive habitats, by reducing over-consumption and waste, and, for example, checking for responsible sourcing, such as palm (RSPO) and soy products (RTSS).
- Base core diet on well-produced British, preferably local, food.
- Eat a varied nutritious diet, which is as inclusive as possible.
- Ask for British (local if possible) pasture-fed dairy produce and meat, preferably from animals grazed on species rich grassland. Pigs and poultry are often intensively reared.
- Choose fish rated 1-3 by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), with 1 being the highest environmental rating, or Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified.
- Choose Fairtrade products (with high ethical and environmental standards).
- Eat rice only occasionally (high methane emissions and water use). Neither rice nor durum wheat for pasta grow in the UK.
- Choose vegetables and fruit produced with minimal chemicals.
- Make well-produced food a high priority in personal/family finances.
- Make a high priority of the UN advice to have only a very limited intake of ultra-processed foods that are high in fat, sugar or salt and additives and low in micronutrients.
- Cook from scratch as often as possible. (Can be cheaper and no more time-consuming than processed food.) Batch cooking, perhaps using a slow cooker or pressure cooker; freezing some portions; sharing meals can all help reduce energy consumption and time.
- Education - nutrition, growing, cooking. Children usually enjoy growing food and cooking with parents and grandparents.
- Eat round a table whenever possible - said to have multiple benefits. Value and enjoy well-produced food. Take an interest in how it is produced. Ask questions.
- It should be easy to make a difference, if we all give a little extra thought to what we eat and drink.

**Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon (CFBoA)** Sustainable Food and Drink Group continues to follow emerging evidence and, drawing on an extensive literature search over several years, has produced the following documents:

- Sustainable Food and Drink – Looking after the Earth – see [here](#)
- Confounding Factors in discussions about what we should eat to decrease climate change and ensure sustainable food for all, now and in the future. What gets in the way of communication and clarity around the issues? – see [here](#)
- Environmental Impacts of our Food And Drink: The Misleading Metrics: Are the incomplete and anomalous metrics used to assess the carbon footprint of food misleading public policies and dietary recommendations? – see [here](#)

See also the Sustainable Food and Drink Group section at:

[www.climatefriendlybradfordonavon.co.uk](http://www.climatefriendlybradfordonavon.co.uk), where you can also sign up to CFBoA's monthly newsletter. For further information, or to get involved in any of the CFBoA Action Groups, contact [climatechampions@gmail.com](mailto:climatechampions@gmail.com).

### **One size does not fit all**

Many documents from the international organisations give generalised data based on global statistics. However, in seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is likely that one size does not fit all. As well as global and national measures, local and individual solutions need to be found, and the evidence is changing and developing.

## **Working for a low carbon future**