

Combining health promotion/health protection with environmental issues: sustainability as a part of national dietary guidelines

**Can we feed Europe sustainably and equitably?
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- Need for multi-disciplinary and inter-sectoral work (food, environment, health)
- Revision of Finnish dietary guidelines 2014
- Some projects on sustainable diet
- Challenges in the incorporation sustainability into dietary guidelines



Local structures and economy

Food waste

**Chemical load,
eutrophication,
acidification**

Climate impact, CO2

**Safety and
nutritional
quality**

**Cultural
acceptability**



Taste

Ethical issues: animal welfare, working conditions etc.

Use of resources: land, water, biodiversity

Sustainable diet according to FAO

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.

Revision of Finnish Dietary recommendations

- Regular intervals since 1987, last update 2014
- Based on
 - Joint Nordic Expert work (NNR5), funded by Nordic Council of Ministers
 - Knowledge of public health problems and dietary habits
- Sustainability included in NNR5 and as part of Finnish Dietary guidelines
- Recommendations given by Finnish National Nutrition Council, expert body under Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (members from ministries, research institutions, NGO's, until Mid 2014 also industry and primary production)

Nordic Nutrition Recommendations 2012

- Focus on dietary patterns and whole diet
- Extensive expert work, surveys of scientific evidence and open public hearings
- Available at www.nordicnutrition.org
- Sustainable food consumption at chapter 6 (pages 137-154)
- Review of existing data including food consumption and climate impact, food waste, nutritional benefits of sustainable diet, experiences of healthy and sustainable diets and positive climate impact

Table 1. Possible dietary changes from present average consumption to reach a sustainable diet: Health and environmental impact (10, 48, 49)

Consumption challenges. Change in present average consumption	Health effects		Environmental effects		Comments
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	
Meat and eggs					
Less Meat – Ruminants (beef, sheep, game)	Less saturated fat Decreased cancer risk	Less iron and zinc	Less GHG* Less eutrophication	Lack of grazing animals where land is in abundance results in difficulty keeping the landscape open and varied. This might have a negative impact on biodiversity.	2/3 of all grain produced goes to animal feed. Demand for soy drives deforestation in the Amazon. Combined meat and milk production is more efficient than only meat production.
Less Meat – Pork, poultry	Less saturated fat Decreased cancer risk	Less iron and zinc	Less GHG	Pork and fowl production does not affect biodiversity.	2/3 of grain produced used in animal feed. Demand for soy drives deforestation in the Amazon. Fowl production is very efficient
More eggs	Source of many nutrients		Climate effective	Soy in feed drives deforestation in Amazonas.	Soy can be replaced by domestic legumes.
Dairy products					
Less Dairy Milk	Less saturated fat (if consumption of high-fat dairy is reduced)	Less calcium Less iodine	Less GHG* Less eutrophication	Lack of grazing animals where land is in abundance results in difficulty keeping the landscape open and varied. This might have a negative impact on biodiversity.	Difficult to meet calcium recommendations without milk and dairy products
Less Dairy Cheese	Less saturated fat Less salt	Less calcium Less iodine	Less GHG* Less eutrophication	Lack of grazing animals where land is in abundance results in difficulty keeping the landscape open and varied. This might have a negative impact on biodiversity.	Difficult to meet calcium recommendations without milk and dairy products

Sustainable consumption in Finnish Dietary Guidelines

- Main message: combining human health and environmental health is possible, many synergies, some challenges
- Many approached to sustainability: use of resources and land, production methods, biodiversity, dietary patterns, recycling, traceability
- Data limited, many problems in calculating environmental impacts of individual foods but general guidelines can be given



Guidelines for sustainable consumption (1)

- Increasing intake of plant-based foods reduces climate impact and eutrophication
- Use vegetables in season, climate impact of greenhouse vegetables varies greatly
- Use potatoes, wholemeal barley etc. instead of rice
- Local legumes (beans and peas) improve local soil and are more sustainable than soybeans
- Use local wild berries
- Rapeseed oil and vegetable margarines recommended, also climate impact of olive oil is smaller than butter
- Drink tap water instead of bottled water

Guidelines for sustainable consumption (2)

- Reducing intake of red meat (especially beef) reduces climate impact and eutrophication
- Prefer wild fish: reduces eutrophication unlike fish farms
- Do not use foreign endangered fish species

- **Local food** supports local economy and may improve nutrient cycles and use of resources, transportation of foods has minor impact
- **Organic food** production reduces chemical load and it may improve biodiversity and animal welfare, otherwise it has no benefits over other production methods

- Reduce food waste

Some projects on sustainable nutrition

- **Hyvinvoipa:** analyzing policy coherence of health promotion (inc. nutrition) and sustainability
- **Development of climate-friendly lunch:** testing feasibility and acceptability, “Climate plate”
- **Foodspill:** study on means to reduce food waste with lifecycle approach from farm to waste bin
- **Kultu:** steering instruments to improve sustainability such as environmental strategies for public health services
- **Environmental passport for catering services:** educational material and competency test

“Less is more -wisely” targets and action on food

- Finns appreciate and don't waste food, and choose vegetable based diet

- Sustainability labelling systems for food
- Environmental strategies for public food services
- Guidelines for an 'Healthy and environmental friendly plate model'

PILOTS:

- Save the Food
- Sustainable and climate-friendly food supply chain from field to plate
- Climate plate



■ Picture: Kirmo Kivelä

We continue to reduce food waste

- **In policies**
 - Government report on food policy (2010): halve food waste
 - Government report on food safety (2013): food waste reduction
 - Food safety authority published food donation guide (May 2013) to promote safe food donations from trade and industry to charity organisations
 - National food chain development programs, in 2014 2,4 milj. euros to programs reducing food waste through improved appreciation of food.
 - Novel government program prioritises resource efficiency and food chain profitability. Food waste reduction is integral part of both.
- **Through collaboration**
 - Research on national level (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry: Foodspill, Ministry of Environment: Kuru)
 - Research on Nordic level (2013-2016 program: food waste in primary production, use and influence of date labels on food waste, food donations)
 - Research on EU-level (Fusions)
- **Information towards consumers**
 - Food waste week since 2013 ('waste food lunch', media exposure, public catering actively informing)
- **Voluntary scheme**
 - Trade is working actively to decrease food waste in trade and to increase food donations on a voluntary basis

Some challenges

- Different definitions of sustainability (climate change, biodiversity, use of resources, chemical load, social and economic impact etc.) by different actors → need to build common understanding
- Great variation even within same food category → difficult to give general advise
- Evidence-base often limited (different definitions of sustainability, analysis of different policy options)
- Public acceptance? How to change behaviour and organize services (choice architecture)?
- Importance of public food services/procurement: combining different quality criteria
- Communication among public, policy-makers, media and civil servants in all sectors needs improvement

**Basic facts
have been
known for long
times, now is
time to act**

Thank you !

