

Have I Told You I'm Vegan?

-Why Veganism is More Sustainable than the Standard American Diet-

What is a sustainable diet?

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a sustainable diet is healthy and has a low environmental impact.¹

Why so S.A.D.?

The S.A.D, or Standard American Diet, is high in animal products such as meat and dairy, which have been proven to take up more resources than plant based diets (such as vegan!). Becoming vegan is a great way to reduce the amount of resources you use as an individual.

Where's the proof?

-The environmental impact of the vegan diet is 3.3x lower than the typical omnivorous diet (such as S.A.D)³

-Livestock alone accounts for 80% of total land use and is one of the main drivers of deforestation, biodiversity loss, and land degradation.³ Preserving our forests and maintaining a diverse ecosystem are integral parts of sustaining the environment.

-Reducing the amount of meat in your diet results in a clear increase in carrying capacity, or number of people a diet is able to feed.² Being able to feed large amounts of people with minimal resources is a characteristic of being sustainable.

-A vegan diet is the best way to reduce land use and greenhouse gas emissions (-45% and -51%, respectively, as compared to S.A.D).¹ A major contributor of greenhouse gas emissions is methane, which dairy cows produce a lot of.

To be or not to be?

Energy is lost as you move up trophic levels in a food chain- only about 10% of energy is transferred from one level to the next! Consuming a plant based diet does not have the energy "middleman" that animal product diets have, meaning you are eating more efficiently.

While becoming vegan may not save the world, and it's not realistic for the entire world to be vegan, it is something you can do to contribute to the well being of the Earth.

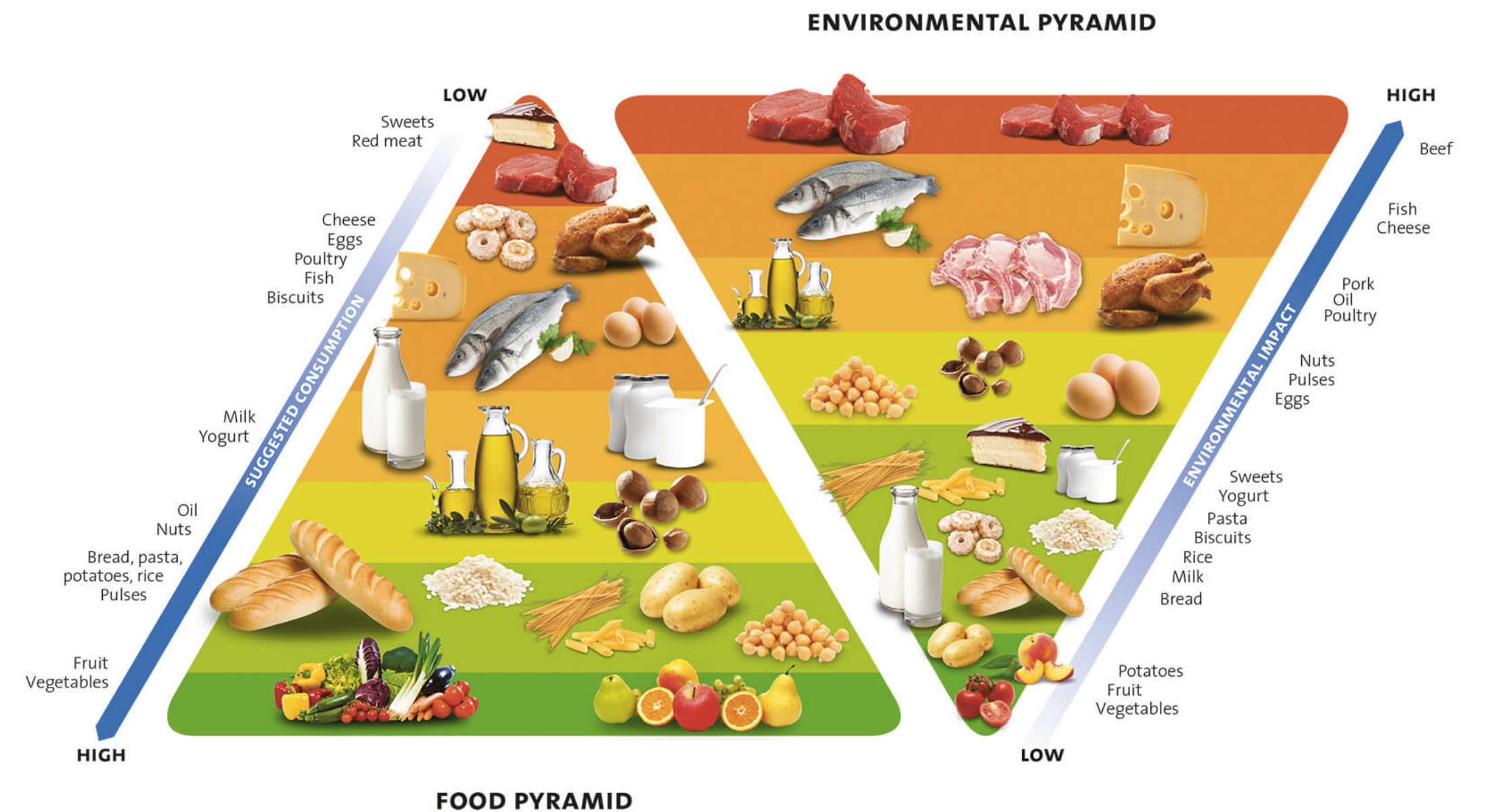


Figure 1: The dietary patterns richer in plant based foods are those with the lowest environmental impact, with meat products having the highest environmental impact.³

1. Aleksandrowicz L, Green R, Joy EJM, Smith P, Haines A (2016) The Impacts of Dietary Change on Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Land Use, Water Use, and Health: A Systematic Review. PLoS ONE 11(11): e0165797. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0165797>

2. Peters CJ, Picardy J, Darrouzet-Nardi AF, Wilkins JL, Griffin TS, Fick GW. Carrying capacity of U.S. agricultural land: Ten diet scenarios. Elem Sci Anth. 2016;4:116. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.12952/journal.elementa.000116>

3. Ruini LF, Ciati R, Pratesi CA, Marino M, Principato L and Vannuzzi E (2015) Working toward healthy and sustainable diets: the "Double Pyramid Model" developed by the Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition to raise awareness about the environmental and nutritional impact of foods. Front. Nutr. 2:9. doi: 10.3389/fnut.2015.00009