

# HUNGRY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

## WHAT IS A “SUSTAINABLE DIET”?

Our food systems contribute to 20-30% of global greenhouse gases emissions. It is the leading cause of deforestation and biodiversity loss, and accounts for 70% of all human water use (FCRN, 2014).

The whole food chain – from farming, through to transport, cooking and waste disposal, contributes to the issue. However it is agriculture where the greatest impacts occur. Crop and livestock production comes at great environmental cost – **farming livestock for meat, eggs and dairy contributes to around 15% of total greenhouse gas emissions globally, and takes up around 70% of available farming land, including land needed for crop production (FAO, 2010).**

**Producing 1kg of beef requires up to 12kg of grain to feed the cattle – it is estimated that the amount of cereal used to feed cattle, pigs and chickens alone could feed the 800 million people currently suffering from hunger and malnutrition, three times over (FAO, 2010).**

A recent study has also found that rising CO2 levels lead to a decrease in the nutritional value of crops, specifically a decrease in protein content in crops such as wheat and rice, and iron content in many different crops (Medek et al. 2017, Smith et al. 2017).

### So should we all follow a plant-based diet?

While a more plant-based diet is undeniably positive for the environment, we don't all need to eliminate meat from our diets – you can make small changes. Introducing one meat free day per week, you will individually be saving the carbon equivalent of boiling 1,165 kettles and saving the equivalent of 26 days of personal water usage. Imagine the impact we could all have by making this change!

### What can we all do to eat more sustainably?

A “sustainable diet” encompasses many different elements, with an overarching aim of having a lower environmental impact and a healthier outcome for ourselves and for the environment (FAO, 2010).

- Have a meat-free day every week – include plant-based protein sources such as beans, pulses and lentils
- Look to reduce our food waste – check out our next blog “Get Wasted!”
- Chose fish from sustainable stocks – look for the MSC Blue Fish label
- Buy local and seasonal produce wherever possible

The Carbon Trust (2016) reported that consuming a diet in line with the Eatwell Guide (including more plant-based foods such as fruit, veg, pulses, wholegrains and sustainably sourced fish, and cutting back on meat, and high-sugar-high-fat foods) would have a 32% lower environmental impact in terms of greenhouse gases, water and land use. Adherence to the Eatwell Guide would also have widespread health benefits, with significantly fewer cases of Type II diabetes, coronary heart disease and cancer by 2026 if we all followed a diet in line with these recommendations (Cobiac et al. 2016).

Check out this month's Get Wasted recipes - Roasted Tofu Gado-Gado Salad, and our Wasted Veggie Hash – for some meat-free meal inspiration!

**If you would like to see the references for this blog please email [hfl@aramark.co.uk](mailto:hfl@aramark.co.uk)**

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