

SUSTAINABLE EATING

- WHY, WHAT AND HOW?

Q: Is the biggest percentage of food waste occurring at the household level?

A: In the report examining the environmental implications of the Eatwell Guide (The Eatwell Guide: a more sustainable diet report (2016), <https://www.carbontrust.com/media/672635/phe-sustainable-diets.pdf>) the Carbon Trust provided data on food waste at the various stages of the food system. According to this, the largest percentage of waste (as a percentage of food at each stage) occurred at the household level (20%).

Q: I agree that making dietary changes (e.g. include more plant based food and fish sources etc.) is probably the most effective way to achieve sustainable eating. However, this has to be done on a macro/national or even global scale for it to be effective. This requires both the input of rigorous legislation and education, which would take a considerable amount of time.

My question is what changes can we expect to see in a foreseeable future? My personal opinion is that Brexit is a once in a generation opportunity to reform our food policy, thus gaining better control, e.g. less restrictions, less red tape, which could encourage innovation of reformulated.

My second question is eatable insect is quite a hot topic at the moment, is it really a sustainable and nutritionally adequate option? Is there any scientific evidence supporting the claims made, e.g. high in protein?

A: The whole topic of sustainable eating is complex, so I agree all stakeholders need to get involved if we are to make a difference. Politicians/ politics (including the whole Brexit debate), food manufacturers, supermarkets, chefs, health professionals, environmentalists, etc, etc. The challenge is how to get everyone on board and talking together.

I think the idea of insects is an interesting one. If we swapped meat for insects, this could help reduce animal

product consumption. The issue is acceptability. Again this needs to be overcome if they are to become a mainstream dietary food. We possibly need to find influencers to start promoting these and maybe this will filter down so eventually they are considered a normal part of our diet. In a way, I suppose plant based dairy alternatives would have been seen as a novelty a few years back and now they're considered mainstream. Unfortunately, I don't have all the answers, but I feel getting sustainably discussed is a start!

Q: Is there a good hand-out I can give patients?

A: You may find the following link to the BDA Food Fact sheet useful: <https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/plantbaseddiets.pdf>

Q: With the media creating panic about carbohydrate and knowing plant foods, especially starchy foods, contain carbohydrate food how do we get people to 'ignore' this panic for them to eat more plant foods?

A: There is a lot of 'noise' in the nutrition world, with many so-called experts providing dietary advice. It's this which often receives media attention. Understandably this is causing confusion. Nutrition professionals are in a position to help people through this noise by providing the facts based on the evidence. The evidence suggests that the healthiest dietary patterns (as we eat a mixed diet, not single nutrients nor isolated foods) are those that include more plant foods such as the Mediterranean diet and Asian cuisines.

Q: Is it appropriate to encourage children to follow a vegan diet?

A: According to the position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits for the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. These diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes.

You may find the following link to this position paper useful <https://www.eatrightpro.org/~media/eatrightpro%20files/practice/position%20and%20practice%20papers/position%20papers/vegetarian-diet.ashx>

Q: Have the recommendations for increasing plant based proteins taken micronutrient requirements, such as zinc, into account?

A: You may find the following links to the BDA Food Fact sheet and the Oatly HCP website useful:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/plantbaseddiets.pdf>

<http://www.oatly.com/healthcareprofessionals/plant-based-eating/>

Q: Is eating locally always more sustainable than importing in-season products from other countries?

A: While foods grown locally, and are in season, are likely to have a lower environmental impact than the same foods produced overseas (e.g. British green beans compared with Kenyan imported beans in June), in the colder months produce which is in season overseas may have a lower footprint than their equivalents produced locally in greenhouses (Spanish versus English tomatoes).

This is because it's generally the production stage which is a greater determinant of overall environmental impact than that of transport, the exception being air freighted foods. It's therefore important to consider how a local food is being produced when out of season, and the types of transport being used to ship overseas produce which is in season.

Q: Tim Lang has co-authored a new text book, "Sustainable Nutrition" I think is the title, and I wonder what other reference texts you may recommend to us?

A: A useful starting point is to read the official reports providing recommendations for sustainable eating. For example,

- Setting The Table; Advice to Government on priority elements of sustainable diets http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/Setting_the_Table.pdf
- Cooking up a storm: Food, greenhouse gas emissions and our changing climate. http://www.fcrcn.org.uk/sites/default/files/CuaS_web.pdf

- DEFRA, Sustainable Food Consumption Follow-up to the Green Food Project (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/229537/pbl4010-green-food-project-sustainable-consumption.pdf
- LiveWell: a balance of healthy and sustainable food choices. http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/livewell_report_jan11.pdf
- LiveWell for LIFE final recommendations. On Our Plate Today: healthy, sustainable food choices http://livewellforlife.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/LiveWell-for-LIFE_Rec-Report_English_Final.pdf
- Eating Better report (2014): Let's talk about meat: changing dietary behaviour for the 21st century <http://www.eating-better.org/uploads/Documents/Let%27sTalkAboutMeat.pdf>

Q: If you suffer from iron deficiency anaemia would a vegan or plant based diet suffice or would it become too costly?

A: You may find the following links to these new BDA Food Fact sheet and the Oatly HCP website useful:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/plantbaseddiets.pdf>

https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/iron_food_fact_sheet.pdf

<http://www.oatly.com/healthcareprofessionals/plant-based-eating/>

Q: You have spoken about lack of awareness and education, will we see more registered dietitians talking about plant based sustainable eating in mainstream media? And how about professional training?

A: We think so. In terms of training, there are an increasing number of resources becoming available which include sustainable eating, including the Eat Well Guide <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide> and the BDAs policy on sustainable diets which, we understand, will be published soon. There is also now a Plant Based Nutrition sub-group of the BDA's Specialist Public Health Group https://www.bda.uk.com/regiongroups/groups/publichealth/plant_based_nutrition