

# Your sustainable diet for the year 2050: More nuts, less sugar and red meat

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Good news, Earthlings! An international team of scientists reports that it is indeed possible to feed everyone on the planet a healthy and environmentally sustainable diet by the year 2050.

All it will take is a wholesale, radical change to what foods we eat and the way we produce them.

"We call it the Great Food Transformation," said Jessica Fanzo, director of the Global Food Ethics and Policy Program at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland. "While that may sound dramatic, we need big transformation and massive cooperation to meet this global challenge."

In a report published Wednesday in *Lancet*, Fanzo, along with 36 colleagues from 16 countries, released a set of scientifically determined targets to guide [food](#) producers, food consumers and policy makers toward creating a food system that will improve human health and the health of the planet.

The proposed diet, based on a two-year review of hundreds of nutrition studies, is not as scary as one might think. Insects are not required eating. No one is asking anyone to become a vegan.

The reference diet includes 2,500 calories per day, which is close to the global average today of 2,370.

In the U.S., men consume 2,800 calories per day while women consume between 2,000 and 2,200, according to the report.

The authors say that red meat can still be on a globally sustainable menu but in drastically reduced quantities. The diet allows for roughly 1 tablespoon of red meat per day. That's the equivalent of one decent-sized hamburger a week, or one steak a month.

Dairy is not off the table, either. The target diet includes up to one glass of milk or other dairy product per day.

For other protein sources the researchers recommend roughly two

servings of fish per week, and 1 { eggs per week. The majority of calories on this diet comes from grains as they do today, but the authors emphasize that we need to shift to whole grains.

They also want to see a 100 percent increase in the amount of legumes, nuts and fruits and vegetables most of us consume and for added sugars to become just 5 percent of our total caloric intake.

"It is very consistent with many traditional diets including the Mediterranean diet," said Walter Willett, Professor of epidemiology and nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health who co-chaired the report. "This is not radical at all in many culinary traditions."

It would also lead to global improvements in human health. If everyone on the planet adapted these dietary rules 11 million premature deaths would be avoided each year, he said.

In order to keep this [diet](#) sustainable as the world's population grows, the authors set goals for how our food is produced as well.

These include a drastic reduction in [greenhouse gas emissions](#) associated with food production from 8.5 to 13.7 gigatons today to about 5 gigatons by 2050.

Environmental targets also require a 50 percent reduction in food waste, and a strict zero expansion of farmland. Sustainable food production will also require big changes in irrigation and fertilizer use, the authors said.

Of the 7.6 billion people on Earth today, nearly 1 billion don't have enough food, 2 billion are overweight or obese and another 2 billion don't get enough nutrients, the authors wrote. In addition, unhealthy diets are responsible for more deaths than unsafe sex, drugs, alcohol and tobacco use combined.

Environmentally, global food production is currently responsible for 30 percent of global greenhouse-gas emissions and 70 percent of freshwater use, the authors said. Meanwhile the conversion of natural ecosystems to farmland is the No. 1 driver of extinction.

Considering that the world is expected to have a population of 9.8 billion people by 2050, it is clear that a massive change is needed, the authors said.

"It's a win-win," said Johan Rockstrom, professor of environmental science at Stockholm University, who worked on the study. "Adopting a [healthy diet](#) helps us deal with the climate and meet sustainable development goals."

Now all they have to do is get everyone on the planet to go along with it.

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