

Dietary guidelines are a win-win-win for nutrition, environment and animals

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The national dietary guidelines in Australia, Brazil, Ireland, Japan, Portugal, and Slovenia benefit nutrition, environment and animal welfare, Leiden environmental scientists write in the journal *One Earth*.

However, the national guidelines of other countries face trade-offs, negatively impacting at least one of these three factors. "Win-win-wins are possible for dietary changes, but rarely realized," says lead author Laura Scherer.

Studying the impact of national diets

National dietary guidelines seldom take into account sustainability. Still, if people would follow their national guidelines that would greatly affect the environment and [animal welfare](#), as well as [nutritional value](#). Therefore, for the first time, Leiden researchers studied the effects of following national guidelines on these three aspects. They also compared the effects of following the guidelines with those of average diets consumed. They found that many countries face trade-offs between these aspects, for instance, benefiting nutritional value but harming the environment and animal welfare.

Most drastic reduction in the Netherlands

Ironically, South Korea does not face any trade-offs: switching to the national guidelines would have a [negative impact](#) on all three aspects. Furthermore, the researchers show that guidelines in Latvia, Portugal, and the Netherlands envisage the most drastic reduction in animal product consumption, by more than 50 percent. The Netherlands is one of the few countries that take the environment into account.

Win-win-win

"Several countries have demonstrated that it is possible to achieve beneficial synergies across all three dimensions," Scherer says.

"Therefore, I hope that our results stimulate a revision of dietary guidelines that considers all three aspects and tries to exploit the

opportunity we have for a win-win-win."

More information: Laura Scherer et al. Opportunity for a Dietary Win-Win-Win in Nutrition, Environment, and Animal Welfare, *One Earth* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.oneear.2019.10.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2019.10.020)

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