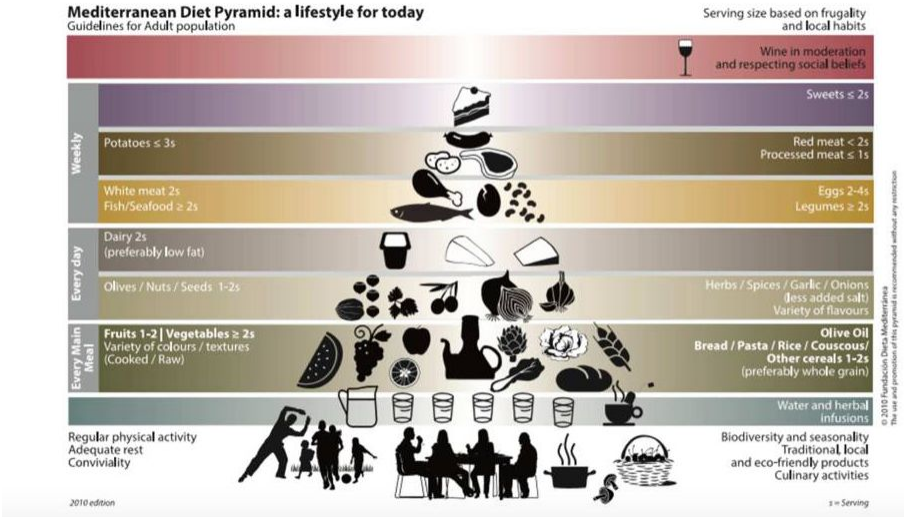
The Mediterranean Diet

Increased Sustainability in America

Brighid Smith, Marc Choi, Mays Kiernan, Mia Camilliere (Section 5, Group 5)

Why?

- ➔ The Mediterranean diet may not be the most sustainable in comparison to vegan or vegetarian diets, but is better than the average American diet in terms of its footprint.
  - ◆ It is a stepping stone towards more environmentally friendly eating habits.

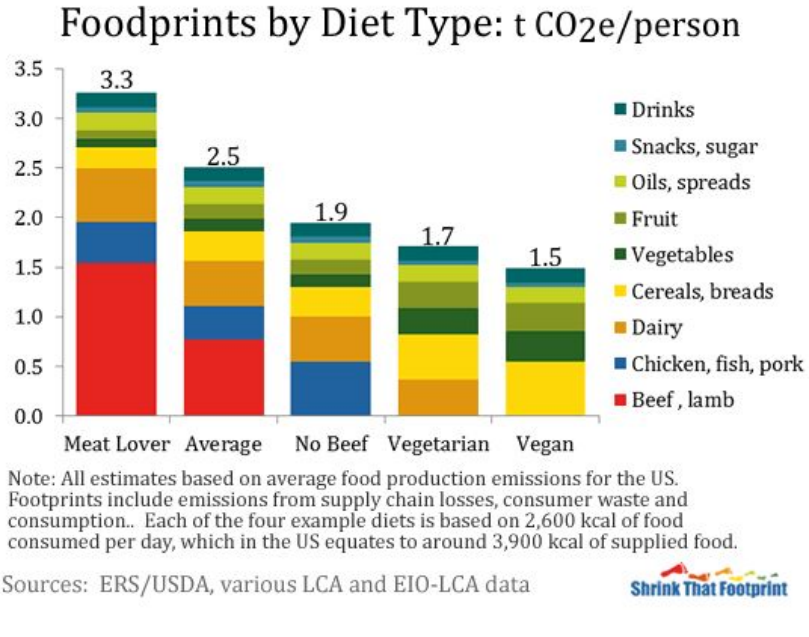


What is it?

- ➔ Main focus on fruit, vegetables, and grain
- ➔ Avoidance of red meat more than once a month
  - ◆ A way to reduce red meat consumption without giving up food choices
  - ◆ Image Source: Sáez-Almendros, 2013
- ➔ Fish and poultry in moderation

How does it help?

- ➔ *Greenhouse Gas Reduction*
  - ◆ The food sector produces around 15-30% of the total greenhouse gas emissions (Castañé, Antón, 2017).
  - ◆ Livestock-based products are responsible for most GHG emissions due to trophic structure & agriculture practices. Shifting dietary patterns towards increased non-rice cereal, fruit & vegetable consumption could decrease GHG emissions (Vetter et al., 2017).
- ➔ *Grazing/Agricultural Land and Water Consumption Reduction*
  - ◆ There will be less land needed for livestock and emphasis on fish and poultry (Sáez-Almendros, 2013).
    - Fish and poultry are less of a drain on resources than red meat livestock
  - ◆ Deforestation is also reduced since about a third of crops are used to feed livestock and 26% of ice-free land is used for grazing. These fields can be used for other purposes (FAO).
  - ◆ Image source: Wilson 2013



So what? Low water consumption, decreased land use and low greenhouse gas emissions imply that the Mediterranean diet leaves a small ecological footprint and proves to be an environmentally sustainable diet when compared to an average diet.

The Mediterranean Diet

Increased Sustainability in America

Brighid Smith, Marc Choi, Mays Kiernan, Mia Camilliere (Section 5, Group 5)

Cited References

Castañé S, Antón A. Assessment of the nutritional quality and environmental impact of two food diets: A Mediterranean and a vegan diet. 2017 Jan 1 [accessed 2017 Oct 28]:929–937.

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations). 2012. Livestock and Landscapes.[Internet]. [Accessed 2017 October 28]

Wilson, Lindsay. The Carbon Footprint of 5 diets compared. 2013 [accessed 2017 Oct 28]

Sáez-Almendros, S., Obrador, B., Bach-Faig, A., & Serra-Majem, L. (2013). Environmental footprints of Mediterranean versus Western dietary patterns: beyond the health benefits of the Mediterranean diet. *Environmental Health*, *12*, 118.

Vetter SH, Sapkota TB, Hillier J, Stirling CM. Greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural food production to supply Mediterranean diets: Implications for climate change mitigation. 2017 Jan 16 [accessed 2017 Oct 28]:234–241.