

Supporting Change

Registered dietitians can take a variety of simple steps to support change in their worksites, the healthcare sector, and their communities.

Food Service Setting & Community Setting

Assess current/baseline purchasing practices. You may choose to utilize the Balanced Menu Baseline Tool.

Develop & Implement a sustainable food procurement policy and plan within the Food Service Department.

Here Are Some Policy Ideas

- Join the Balanced Menus Challenge, which sets a goal to reduce meat procurement by 20% in 12 months.
- Create food policies that encourage inclusion of serving sustainable meals, snacks, and beverages at meetings and conferences.
- Develop procurement policies that enable purchase of 3rd party certified meat or meat with appropriate USDA label claims.
- Write Request for Proposals (RFP's) that reflect your organization's sustainable food procurement goal.

Send to distributors and suppliers encouraging them to offer more products that fit your preferences.

Tools Available

- **Green Guide for Health Care (GGHC) Food Credits** – A component of the GGHC (www.gghc.org), the nation's only voluntary benchmarking tool for health care design, construction and operations.
- Policy and plan examples: www.sustainablefoodpolicy.org
- Facts and ideas on key food issues **Health Care Without Harm: www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org**

Communicate with your group purchasing organization and food service company representatives about your interest in sustainable meat procurement. Work with them to create options that enable you to move toward your sustainable purchasing goals.

Use local resources (such as farmers market managers, state department of agriculture, local non-profits) to develop relationships with farmers and purchase direct where distributors are unable to meet your goals.

Clinical Setting

Support change in the way we (peers and clients) view our plate. Share evidence that a Balanced Menus diet is nutritionally adequate.

Help Design menu options with chefs and food service directors that support the Balanced Menus guidelines and that take individual patient dietary needs into account.

Counsel patients during their hospital stay and as out-patients on the values of Balanced Menus; why the hospital has adopted this program and how they might personally integrate these values.

Reframe the conversation with patients: Suggest a shift from being just an eater, to a person whose eating choices are a vote for changing the current food system. Remind patients that healthy eating is a means of preventive treatment.

All Settings

Educate, Research, Market, and Communicate the ecological aspects of Balanced Menus to staff and retail customers.

Points of Discussion

- The benefits of **sustainable agriculture**
(Suggested resource: Horrigan L, Lawrence RS, Walker P. How Sustainable Agriculture Can Address the Environmental and Human Health Harms of Industrial Agriculture. *Envir Health Perspectives*. 2002 May; 110(5): 445-456.)
 - ▶ Increased beneficial nutrients in organic farming
 - ▶ Increased healthy fats in grass-fed animals
 - ▶ Soil & water quality preservation
 - ▶ Reduced dependence upon chemical pesticides and petroleum– based fertilizers
- Relationship of environmental pollutants, animal feed and human health
- Rise in **antibiotic resistance**
- The “**true cost**” of food

▶ HELPFUL RESOURCES

American Dietetic Association resources

- *Position Paper: Food and Nutrition Professional Can Implement Practices to Conserve Natural Resources and Support Ecological Sustainability.* June 2007. *J Am Diet Assoc.* V.107, Issue 6, 1033-1043.
- *Healthy Land, Healthy Food & Healthy Eaters: Dietitians Cultivating Sustainable Food Systems,* Angie Tagtow, MS, RD, LD and Alison Harmon PhD, RD, LN (2009). Available online at www.hendpg.org.
- *Position Paper: Vegetarian Diets.* July 2009, *J Am Diet Assoc.* V 109, Issue 7, 1266-1282.

Health Care Without Harm resources

- Sustainable purchasing guidelines: www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org

Other resources

- Civic dietetics: opportunities for integrating civic agriculture concepts into dietetic practice, Jennifer L. Wilkins, PhD, RD, *Agric Hum Values* (2009) 26:57–66.
- *Food Hub* – Resource site for local, sustainable food sourcing: www.ecotrust.org/foodhub

For full details on the cited references and bolded statements, download the electronic version from one of the following sources.



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▶ The Food-Climate Relationship

The Registered Dietitians' Balanced Approach to Positive Change

As food and nutrition experts, it is important for Registered Dietitians to understand the connection between where and how our food is produced and the subsequent impact on the health of individuals and our environment. Public demand in the United States for low cost, convenient, and processed food in combination with farming policies that regulate food production, have led to a food system that supports large, industrial, non-diverse farms.

The American Dietetic Association's Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group (HEN) and Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) jointly formed Sustainable Foods in Health Care Taskforce, has created this resource to help dietetic professionals advocate for nutritious, sustainable health care food. We believe this resource will assist you in understanding the links between how food is produced, processed, and transported and the effect this has on human and environmental health.

The most prevalent method of farming in the U.S. relies on the use of inputs such as hormones, arsenic, antibiotics, pesticides, and fertilizers which may negatively impact the health of animals, farmers, consumers, and the environment. Poor nutrition is now a risk factor for four of the six leading causes of death in the U.S.: heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer.¹ Environmental, social, and economic attributes of our food system – how we produce and distribute food – are as relevant to our food choices as dietary recommendations when our health is concerned. As recognized food and nutrition professionals and community stewards, it is our ethical responsibility to seek opportunities to influence the food choices and purchases of individuals and institutions to support a shift toward a more nutritious and sustainable food system.

“It is the position of the American Dietetic Association to encourage environmentally responsible practices that conserve natural resources, minimize the quantity of waste generated, and support ecological sustainability of the food system.”²”



Our Food & Climate Connection

▶ QUICK FACTS



Globally, livestock for meat and dairy production accounts for 18% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, more than every single car, train, and plane on the planet.³



According to the United States Department of Agriculture, worldwide meat consumption has been steadily rising for decades with the American public consuming on average 67 pounds of beef per person per year.^{4,5}



Red meat is approximately 150% more greenhouse gas (GHG) intensive than chicken or fish.⁶



The amount of grain fed to U.S. livestock is about ten times the amount consumed by the U.S. population.⁷ It is estimated that global demand for meat and grain will almost double by 2020 putting additional strain on limited resources and hampering our ability to feed the growing world population.⁸



Sustainable and grass-fed livestock operations reduce greenhouse gas emissions through decreased fossil energy use and their high-quality pasture can lower methane emissions caused by cattle rumination by capturing carbon.⁹

Food choices not only directly influence the health of eaters, but profoundly influence the health of the planet.¹⁰

Balanced Menus

Health Care Without Harm's **Balanced Menus** program is a strategic human health and climate initiative that moves meat from the center of the plate, simultaneously increasing fruit, vegetable, and whole grain consumption while refocusing on the purchase of sustainable animal protein options.

As a means of implementation, the **Balanced Menus Challenge** is a voluntary commitment by health care institutions to **reduce their meat procurement by 20% in 12 months**. An overall reduction in the amount of animal protein purchased will naturally generate a cost savings. Collectively, the changes encouraged in the Challenge serve to leverage the purchasing power of the health care sector to increase demand for healthy sustainable options.

The **Balanced Menus Toolkit** provides a variety of resources to assist in implementing a successful Balanced Menus program. HEN DPG Sustainable Foods in Health Care Task Force members have found this initiative to be a valuable resource for Registered Dietitians. The Toolkit includes:

- ▶ **The Balanced Menus Baseline Calculator**
Establish baseline purchasing practices to measure progress over time
- ▶ **The Carbon Footprint Calculator**
Convert your food purchases into their climate impact
- ▶ **Balanced Menus Recipe Exchange**
Utilize a variety of recipes, with nutritional information included, that meet the Balanced Menus criteria
- ▶ **Balanced Menus Strategies & Case Studies**
Learn from others in their journey to more sustainable food practices
- ▶ **Educational Signage Templates for Patients, Staff, & Visitors**
Let people know what you are doing!



For more information on Balanced Menus and the Toolkit or to contact a Healthy Food in Health Care Coordinator visit www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org.

Balanced Menus FAQs

Q: What are some possible health benefits for my patients/clients following the Balanced Menus Program (BMP)?

A: Eating a plant-based diet has an overall lowered risk of obesity and ischemic heart disease,¹¹ a lowering effect on low-density lipoprotein levels¹² and blood pressure levels, as well as lower rates of hypertension^{13,14} and type 2 diabetes.^{15,16} The overall risk of chronic disease is decreased due to the lower dietary intakes of saturated fat and cholesterol, and higher intakes of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, legumes, fiber, and phytochemicals.¹⁷

Q: Why do RDs encourage purchasing meat raised sustainably through the BMP?

A: Some studies have found that sustainably raised meat, poultry, and dairy have higher nutrient quality.¹⁸ Grass-fed beef contains higher omega-3 fatty acids, lower trans fats and saturated fats compared to its grain-fed counterpart.¹⁸ Meat and poultry from pastured animals is lower in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol, and higher in conjugated linoic acid (CLA). They also have a healthier and preferred ratio of “good fats” to “bad fats¹⁹” and contain a greater amount of beneficial nutrients such as; B-vitamins, vitamin E, and phytochemicals; lutein, zeaxanthin, and beta-carotene.^{20,21}

Q: How do I gather interest in the program from my health care facility food service director or hospital administrator?

A: Purchasing less meat of a better quality may actually result in a cost savings. Buying directly from a local rancher/producer stimulates the local economy and encourages a relationship with the local community that supports a positive public image. A growing number of resources are available to develop these relationships. Contact your regional Health Care Without Harm Coordinator (www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org) to learn more.

Q: Where can I find more information on the food-climate connection and the Balanced Menus Program?

A: Multiple evidence-based resources and practical tools are available to registered dietitians. You may access the components of the Balanced Menus Toolkit by visiting: www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org. For more information, see the Resources section at the end of this document.