

Sustainable Healthy Diets

Implications for policy & research

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european public health alliance





European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)

A member-led organisation made up of public health NGOs, patient groups, health professionals and disease groups, we work to improve health and strengthen the voice of public health in Europe.



WHAT ARE SUSTAINABLE DIETS?

“Sustainable Diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations.

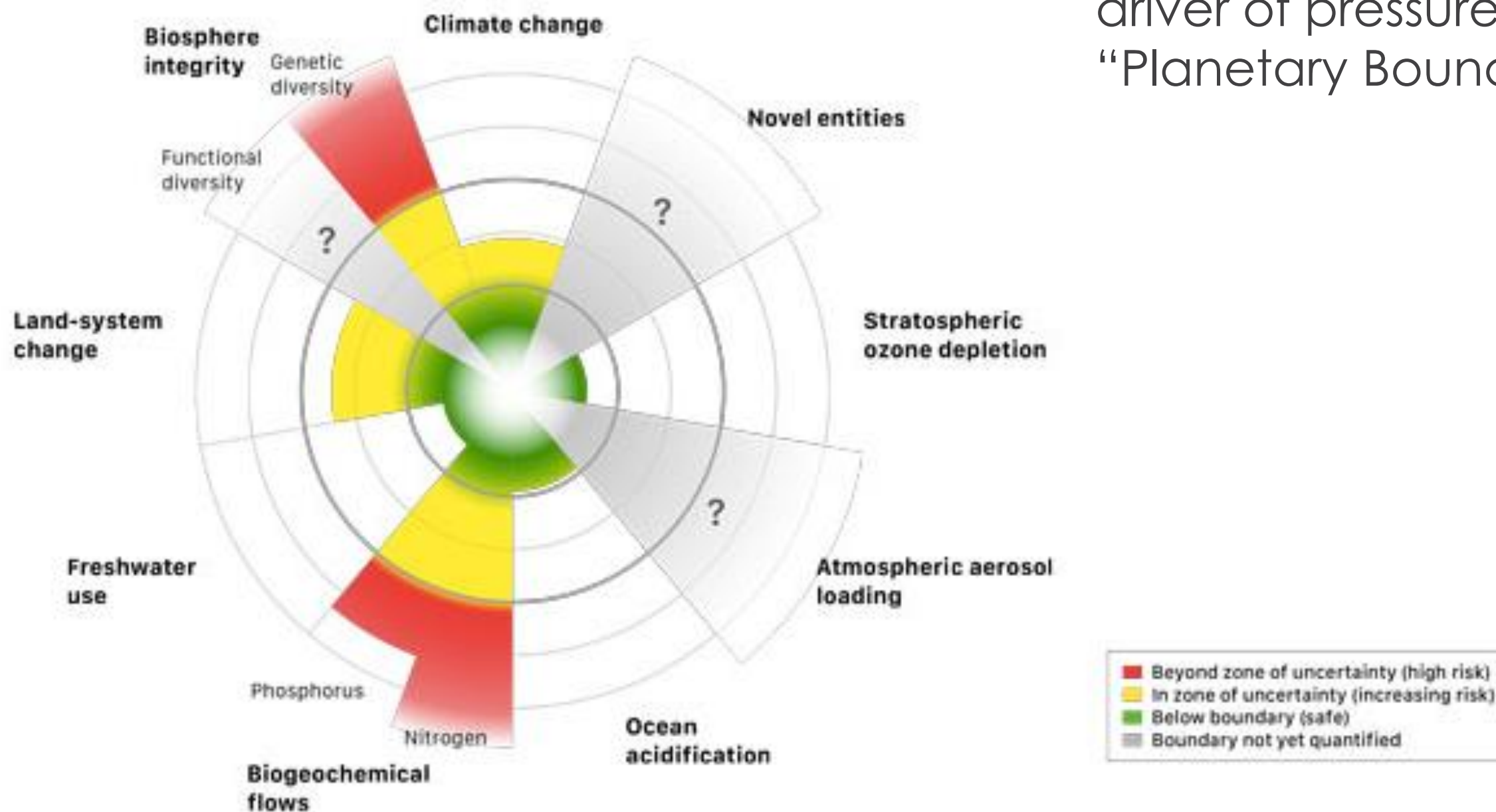
Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources.” (FAO)

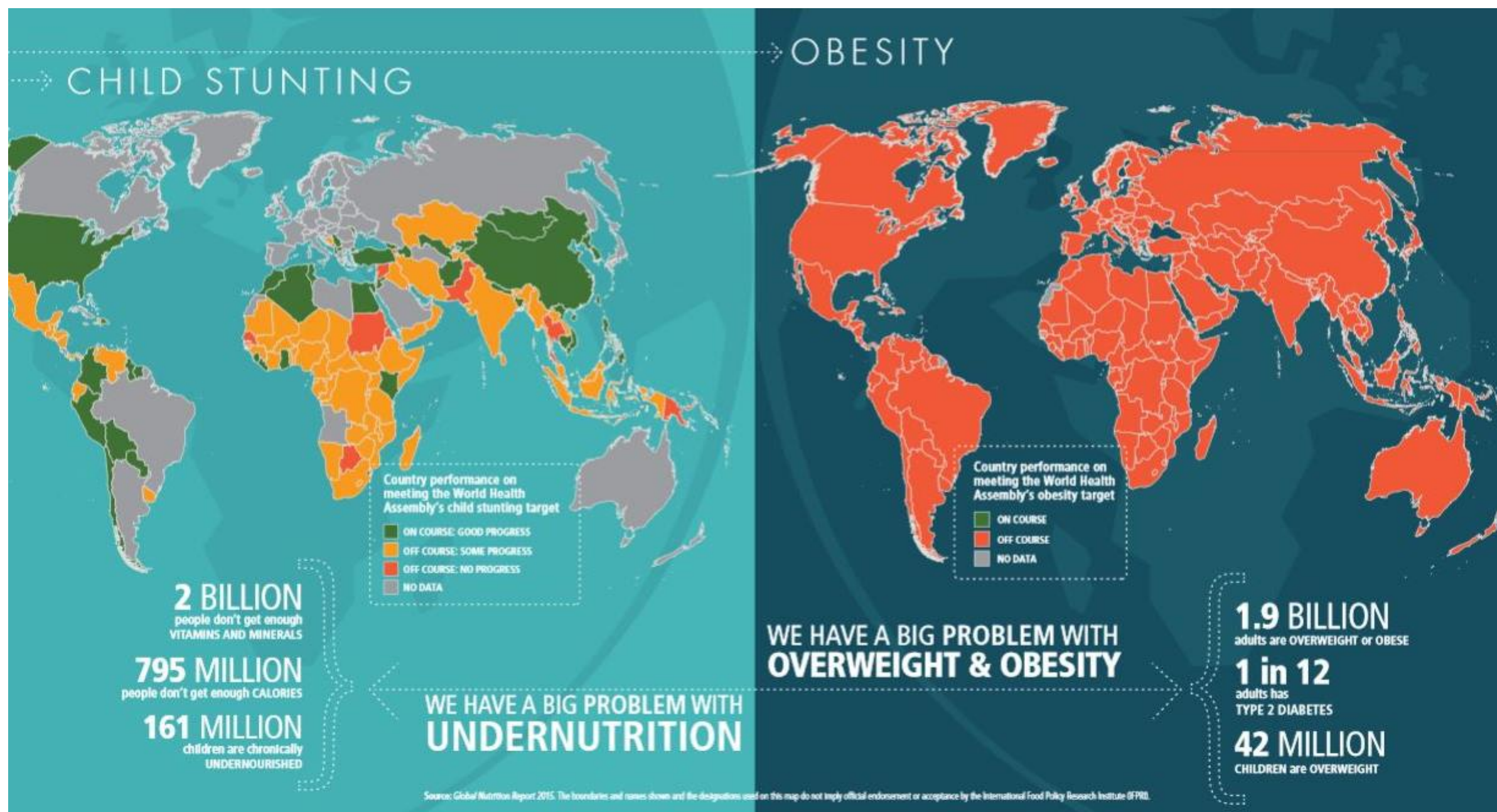




WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Food system = major driver of pressures on “Planetary Boundaries”.





@ Global Nutrition Report 2015

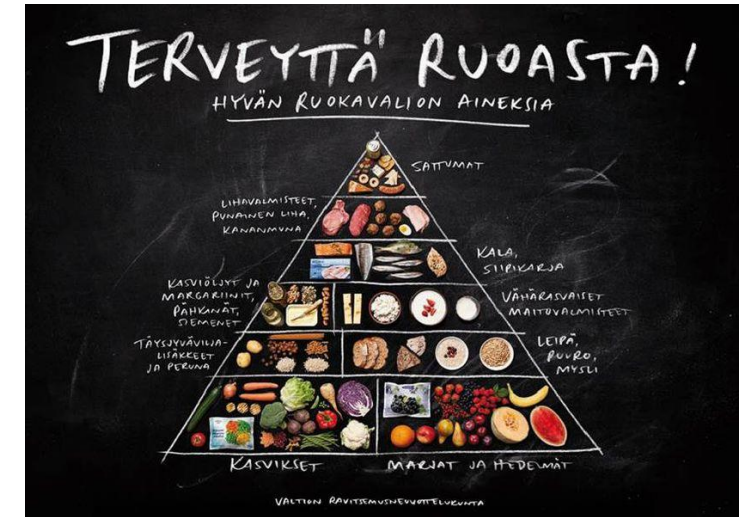
...and in Europe, unhealthy diet = risk factor No. 1 for all healthy life years lost. (Global Burden of Disease)



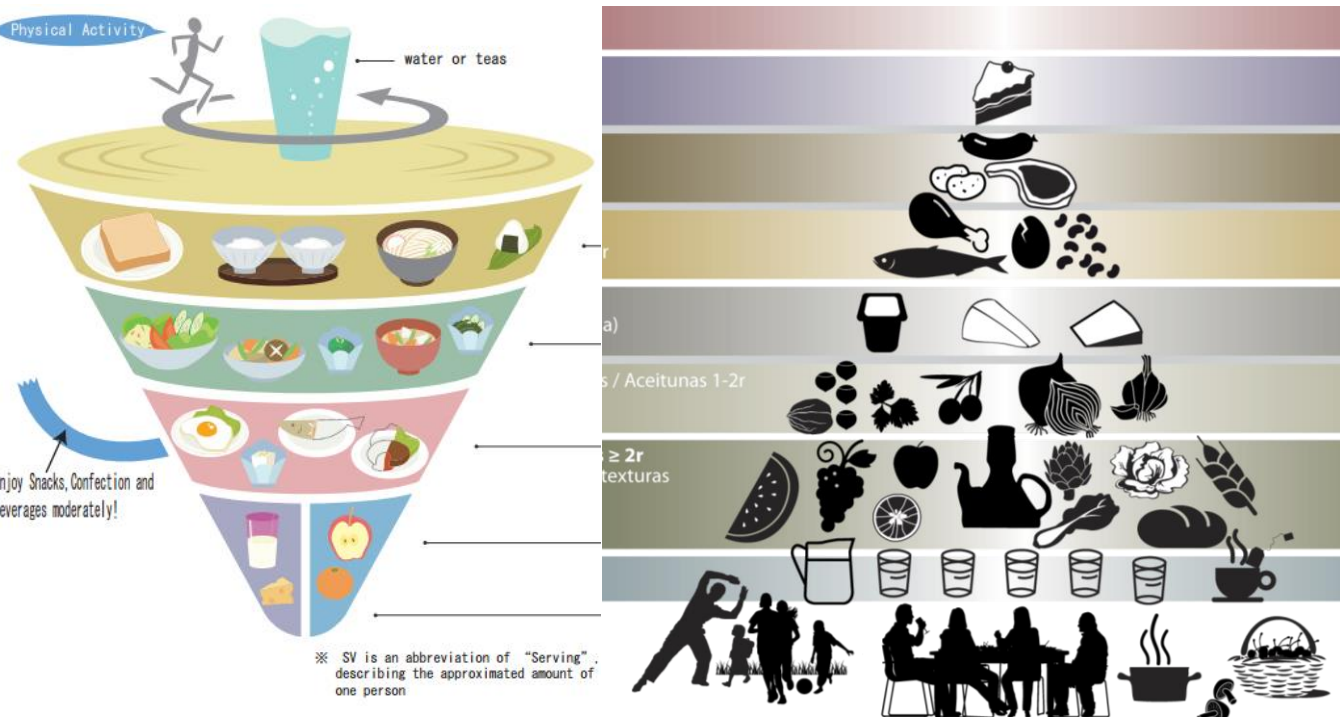
DIETS FOR HUMAN HEALTH

WHO healthy diet: (Fact sheet N°394)

- Fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts and whole grains
- At least 400g of fruits and vegetables a day
- Less than 10% of total energy from free sugars
- Less than 30% of total energy from fats
 - Less than 10% of total energy from saturated fats
 - Less than 1% of total energy from trans fats
- Less than 5g of salt per day
- And see: 'WHO Vitamins and minerals requirements in human nutrition'



Vegetarian & Vegan Diet Pyramid

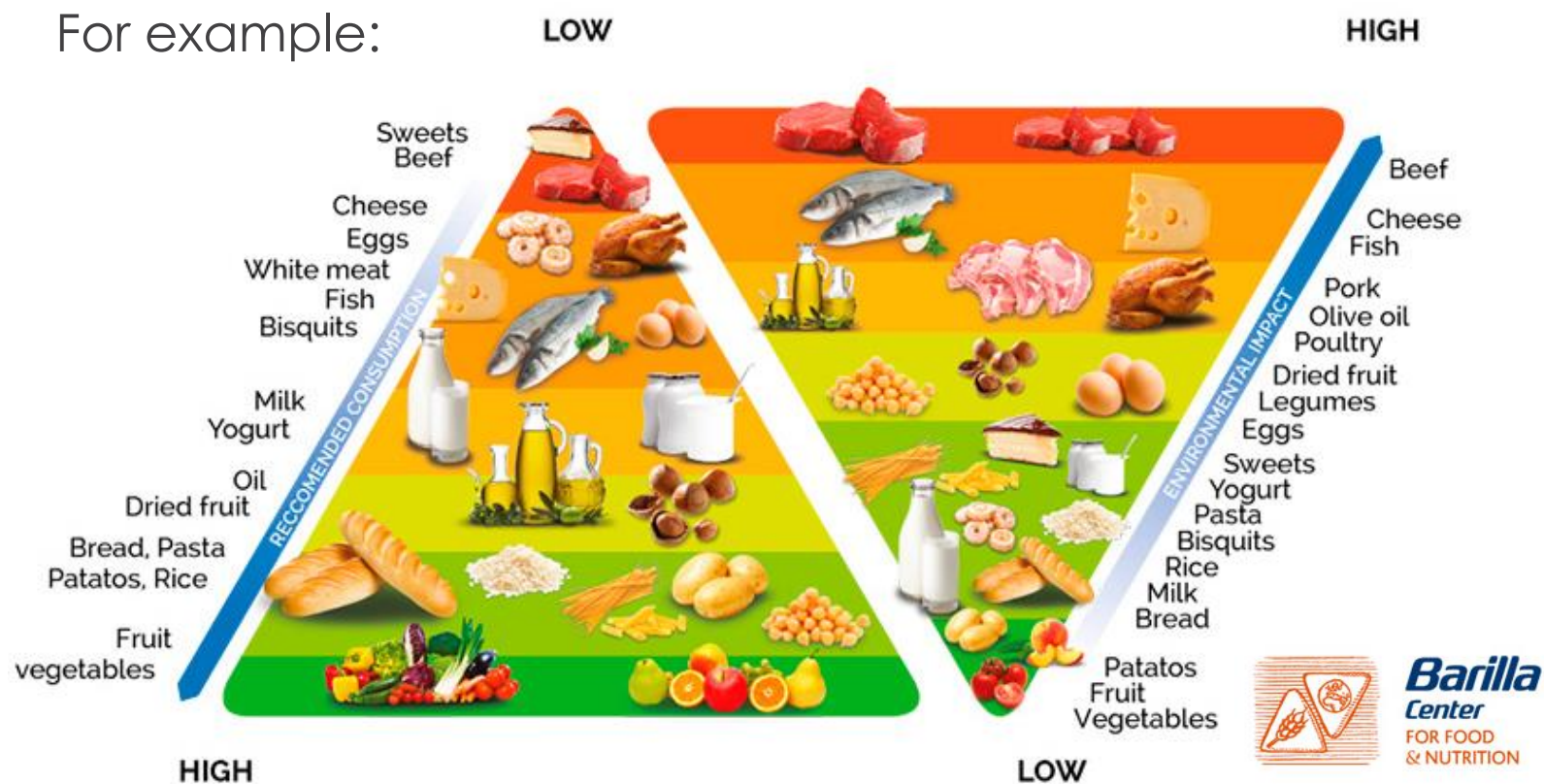




DIETS FOR PLANETARY HEALTH

ENVIRONMENTAL PYRAMID

For example:



Animal products = 'elephant in the room', but certainly not the only factor.

FOOD PYRAMID

“halving the consumption of meat, dairy products and eggs in the European Union would achieve a 40% reduction in nitrogen emissions, 25–40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and 23% per capita less use of cropland for food production.”

(Westhoek et al. (2014) Global Environmental Change)



SUSTAINABLE DIETS: TRADE-OFF OR SYNERGY?

“Across studies, consistent evidence indicated that a dietary pattern higher in plant-based foods (...) and lower in animal-based foods (especially red meat), as well as lower in total energy, is both healthier and associated with a lesser impact on the environment.”

Nelson et al., 2016, *Advances in Nutrition*
(systematic review)

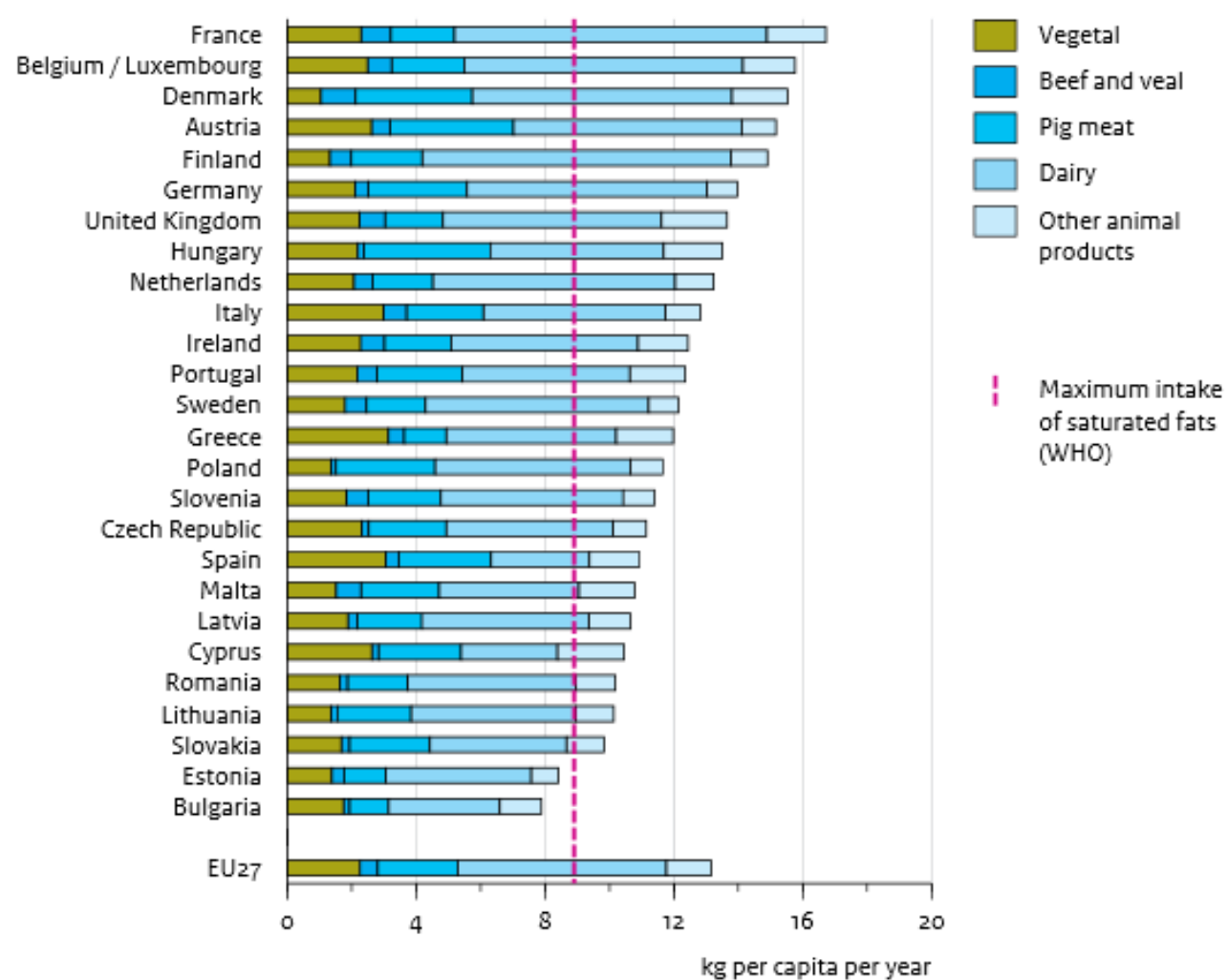
“Transitioning toward more plant-based diets that are in line with standard dietary guidelines could reduce global mortality by 6–10% and food-related greenhouse gas emissions by 29–70% compared with a reference scenario in 2050. (...) Overall, we estimate the economic benefits of improving diets to be 1–31 trillion US dollars, which is equivalent to 0.4–13% of global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2050.”

Springmann et al., 2016, *PNAS*



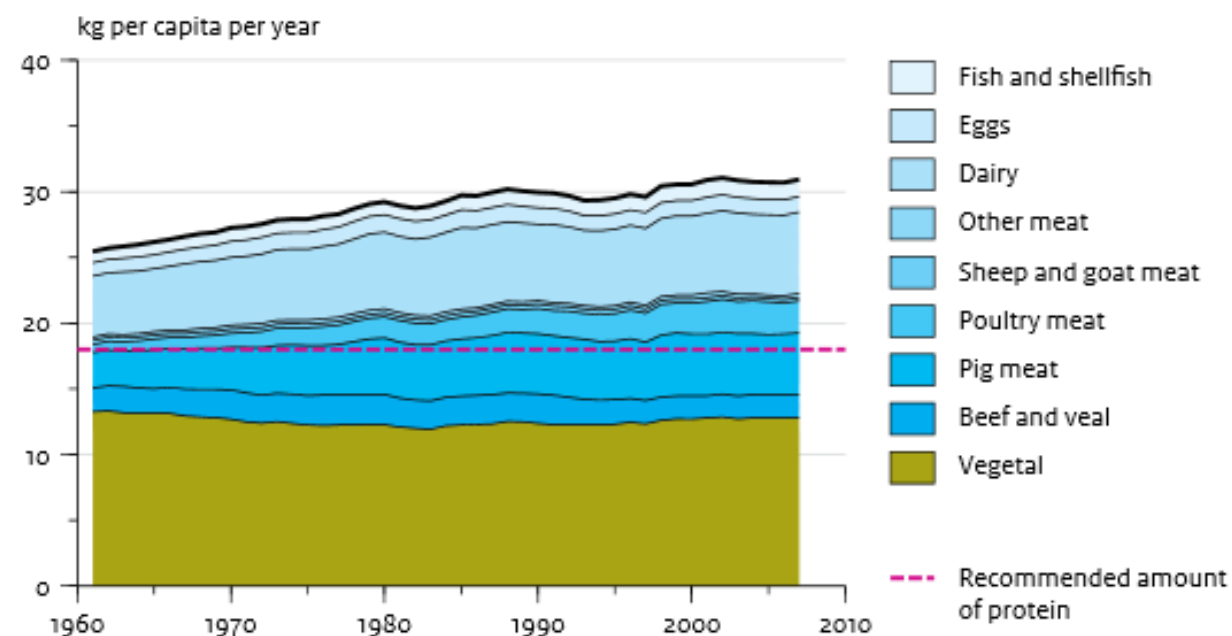
CONSIDERABLE ‘ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE’

Intake of saturated fats in EU27, 2007



Source: PBL analysis based on FAO (2010) and NEVO (2010)

Intake of protein in EU27



Source: PBL analysis, based on FAO (2010), Gezondheidsraad (2001), NEVO (2010), Schmidhuber (2007), Voedingcentrum (2008), WHO (2003b, 2007)

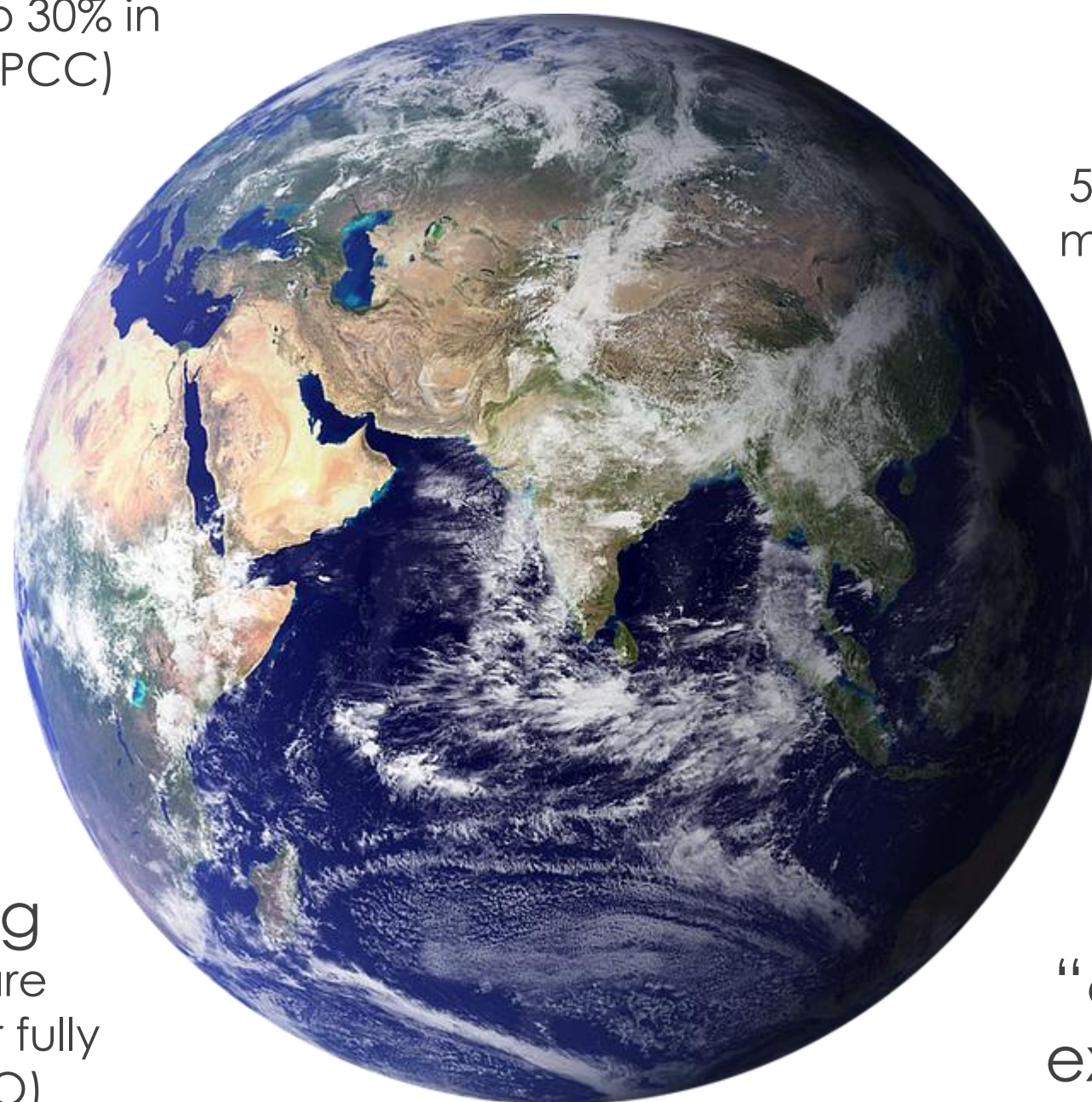


CONTEXT: SOME CHALLENGES TOWARDS 2050

Climate change
Expected falls in productivity up to 30% in some regions (IPCC)

2.5 billion more people by 2050

Land availability
25% of soils degraded, '60 harvests left' (FAO)



Water scarcity
50% of world population may live with water stress by 2050 (MIT)

1/3 of food wasted (FAO)

Antimicrobial resistance
10 million deaths per year by 2050? (AMR Review)

Overfishing
87% fisheries are overexploited or fully exploited (FAO)

"6th global mass extinction event"



SUSTAINABLE DIETS: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

1. There can be no sustainable food system (and thus no sustainable production) without sustainable consumption.
2. Sustainable diets concept can help guide our understanding of what is efficient resource use.
3. Consumption patterns are a policy challenge, not a 'given'.
4. Sustainable diets concept is helpful for articulating opportunities for co-benefits in a food systems transition.



SUSTAINABLE DIETS: RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS


1. Need to mainstream lifecycle assessment into all food policy analysis and elaborate methodologies for applying full cost accounting.
2. Elaborate scenarios to discover possible society-wide repercussions of adopting different types of diets, including benefits, trade-offs and unintended consequences.
3. More research into the concept of 'nutritional yield' and options for applying it in practice.
4. More priority to policy implementation research, including policy innovation, monitoring and evaluation.



MAXIMISING GROWTH OR FINDING BALANCE?





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