

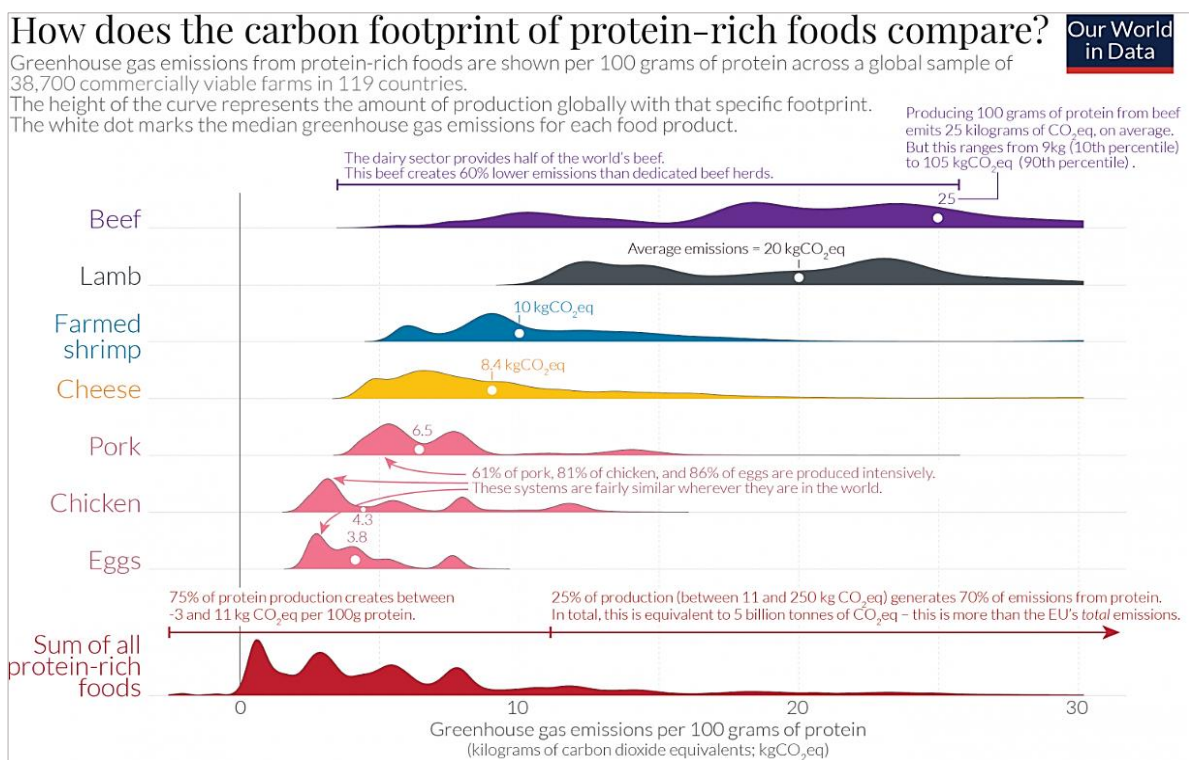
EMBRACING FLEXITARIANISM AND PESCATARIANISM FOR HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Healthy People, Healthy Planet

The use of plant-based diets is increasing worldwide. Regular meat eaters are looking in reducing to moderate consumption of meat or fish due to safety and health concerns⁴. According to a survey by FMCG Gurus, 45% of regular meat eaters are looking to modify their meat consumption over the next twelve months while 22% of consumers say they plan to increase plant-based food intake because of COVID-19⁴.

Adopting a plant-based diet is said to be an excellent way to increase health since it can reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases mainly cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and cancer compared with that of nonvegetarian diets⁵. This transition toward plant-based diets is aligned with standard dietary guidelines which could help to reduce global mortality by 6–10%¹¹.

From an environmental perspective, going vegan or eating less meat in our diets can contribute significantly to our more sustainable economies¹³. By shifting toward more plant-based diets, it can lower the impact of food production on the climate and contribute to improve food security for future generations¹². Apart from that, the exclusion of all animal-based products showed a reduction in premature mortality of 22% on average and a reduction of food-related greenhouse gas emissions of 82%⁶. Our World in Data's research showed that producing 100g of beef emits an average of 25kg of CO₂ equivalents. Lamb and farmed shrimp are other major emitters⁸.



Source: Our World in Data, 2020

Flexitarians vs Pescatarian



A flexitarian diet (FD) is a combination of the words “flexible” and “vegetarian” and refers to a diet where consumers reflect as “meat-reducers.” They mainly eat vegetarians but occasionally eat meat which includes red meat, poultry, seafood, and fish⁴. This diet is meant to be flexible and can be adapted to local and regional contexts, culinary or cultural traditions, and personal dietary preferences. Also, there is no firm definition as to how much meat they should eat during the week, whether it’s once a day, once a week, or occasionally, because this diet is up to the individual person⁷.

Flexitarian or semi-vegetarian diets could also be useful in helping those with high meat intakes to fall in line with recommended guidelines³. For example, data from the UK National Diet and Nutrition Survey showed that red and processed meat intakes were 84 g/day for men and 47 g/day for women¹. Normally this group may choose free-range, organic, and other options that favour the ethical treatment of animals^{3,7}.



Pescatarians are defined as those who maintain a vegetarian diet with the addition of fish and other seafood like shrimp, mussels, salmon, crabs, and lobster but abstain from eating all meat and animal flesh (like red meat and poultry)⁷. Pescatarians are likely to follow their diets because they believe or are morally motivated that fish is healthful¹. According to a study conducted, approximately 41% of pescatarians did not consider fish to be a type of meat¹⁰.

Pescatarians also allowed beans and legumes like tofu and tempeh, grains, fruits, and dairy products which are high in Omega-3 fatty acids that necessary part of someone’s diet⁷. Moreover, a study showed that pescatarians can lower the risk of overall cancer by 9% when compared with meat-eaters⁹.

Take Home Messages

Shifting away from meat-heavy diets towards diets containing more plant-based foods is broadly beneficial to both planetary and personal health, ethical and moral reasons, or also religious beliefs

concerns. Ultimately, the goal is for people to embrace a balanced and diverse diet that meets individual nutritional needs. However, before choosing any diet, it is important to understand its nutritional benefits, potential drawbacks, and suitable food preferences.

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