



September 2014

**U.S. Department of Agriculture and Department of Health and Human Services
2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee**

Public Comments Request 5-2 Food Systems Sustainability

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national non-profit organization that works through science, law and creative media to secure a future where all species can thrive. Using our expertise on sustainability and environmental impacts, we created the innovative “Take Extinction Off Your Plate” campaign to highlight the effects of meat production on the environment and encourage people to adopt a more sustainable diet. We’ve included information and links below to support a call for reduced meat and dairy consumption in the 2015 Dietary Guidelines as the only way to fulfill the advisory committee’s sustainability mandate.

A study published in March from Chalmers University of Technology shows that nitrous oxide and methane emissions from raising livestock may double by 2070 if meat production stays on its current trajectory, making it impossible to meet international climate targets. **This study addresses both the whole food system and the specific commodity of meat by concluding that only way to meet climate goals that can limit global warming is to reduce meat production worldwide.** <http://www.chalmers.se/en/news/Pages/Meeting-climate-targets-may-require-reducing-meat-and-dairy-consumption.aspx>

A study led by University of Cambridge researchers and published in August notes that agriculture, particularly meat production, is the main driver of losses of biodiversity and a major contributor to climate change and pollution. **The researchers provided sustainability metrics with specific dietary recommendations to reduce meat consumption to a level which is approximately half the amount of meat consumed in the average American diet.** <http://www.nature.com/nclimate/journal/v4/n10/full/nclimate2353.html>

A study published in September from the University of Michigan **specifically addresses the climate impacts of the current U.S. Dietary Guidelines**, finding that if Americans followed the guidelines while keeping calorie intake consistent, diet-related greenhouse gas emissions would increase by 12 percent, largely due to recommendations to replace some meat servings with dairy products. <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/09/140905122715.htm>

These three studies – as well as many others published in the past year connecting meat production and consumption to climate change – are evidence that the only way to have a sustainable diet is to eat less meat. Further, the University of Michigan study shows that we cannot achieve sustainability by simply recommending switching from one form of animal protein to another.

The sustainability concerns around meat and dairy production extend beyond climate change. Nearly half of the water used in the U.S. goes toward raising animals for food. According to the EPA, livestock produce 500 million tons of manure per year and livestock operations have polluted 35,000 miles of rivers in 22 states and contaminated groundwater in 17 states. Two hundred and sixty million acres of habitat has been cleared in the U.S. for livestock feed and grazing.

Meanwhile, Americans eat more than two times the global average of meat and nearly two times the daily recommended intake by the Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine. The 2015 Dietary Guidelines are an opportunity to discuss sustainable eating in a meaningful way and make sustainable plant-based options more widely available as a staple of the American diet by calling for reduced meat and dairy consumption.