

Nourishing the Future: Sustainable Food Systems
for Nutrition and Dietetic Students

Module 3: Food and Our Climate

Practice and Resources Booklet



JOHNS HOPKINS
CENTER *for* A LIVABLE FUTURE

FOOD + PLANET

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Module 3: Food and Our Climate [Practice and Resources Booklet]

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Case Study: NYC Health & Hospitals / Sodexo

Assignment

Read the Sodexo [brief](#) and [case study](#). Also available on the Food + Planet [homepage](#).

Discussion Questions

1. How would you implement a plant-based default menu to encourage plant-based foods and reduce meat consumption?
2. What settings are most ideal for this type of approach?
3. How can initiatives such as Meatless Monday be implemented in your institution to advance healthy and sustainable diets?

Supplemental Activity 1: FoodPrint

Assignment

- Visit *one* of the following:
 - [Harvard Foodprint Calculator](#)
 - [Earth Day Foodprint Calculators](#)
 - [FoodPrint Quiz](#)
- **Step 1:** Calculate your foodprint.
- **Step 2:** Discuss your results.
 - How did you do? What food groups contributed the most and least to your foodprint?
 - What labels or notifications would make it easier to make climate-friendly choices?
 - Is it easier to make sustainable and healthy choices at home or away?
 - What are three steps you could take to make climate-friendly food choices?
 - How could addressing plastic and packaging or food miles impact your conclusions?



Supplemental Activity 2: Planetary Health Diet

Assignment

- Review the Target 1: Healthy Diets table on page 10 of the Summary Report of the EAT-Lancet Commission.
https://eatforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/EAT-Lancet_Commission_Summary_Report.pdf
The EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health. (2019). Table 1, Scientific targets for a planetary health diet, with possible ranges, for an intake of 2500 kcal/day [Table]. The Planetary Health Diet. EAT Forum.
<https://eatforum.org/eat-lancet/summary-report/>
- **Step 1:** Compare it to what you eat in a day.
- **Step 2:** Discuss the differences.
 - What food groups do you consume in lower amounts than recommended? Which are higher?
 - What labels or notifications would make it easier to make climate-friendly (and environmentally friendly) choices?
 - Is it easier to make sustainable and healthy choices at home or away?
 - What are three steps you can take to align your meals with the planetary health diet pattern?



Supplemental Activity 3: Institutional Food Service

Assignment

- Review the [Ramsing et al. \(2023\)](#) paper about the implications of dairy- and plant-based milks for nutrition and planetary health.
- **Step 1:** Understand the scenario.
 - You are a member of the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee. Your role is to develop evidence-based guidance for institutional food service providers (e.g., Aramark, Sodexo, Bon Appetit) on how they can refine their menus to better align with public health and sustainability goals.
 - Remember what is at stake. Accurate and nuanced communication to your colleagues at the CIA, and their stakeholders, is critical so that they can make an informed decision about milk sourcing. Your recommendations could impact which types of milk are sold in university, hospital, and government cafeterias all around the globe, with sizable repercussions for food system sustainability and health.
- **Step 2:** Address the topic in question.
 - Which type of milk best aligns with both health and sustainability goals?
 - They are considering cow milk, soy milk, oat milk, and almond milk (among others) and will leverage the concepts of nudging and the food environment to place more sustainable food options front and center in cafeteria settings. Your specific assignment on the Advisory Committee is to investigate the evidence on nutrition, keeping environmental sustainability in mind as well.
- **Step 3:** Review the evidence base.
 - You find a research paper that states, “Of the various milks available on the market, evidence suggests oat milk is best for climate.” Rather than automatically recommending a full switch to oat milk, you decide to look at some other studies. You will also contact the authors and ask some follow-up questions.
 - What additional questions would you want answered?

Glossary

Carbon sequestration. The process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide. ([USGS, 2025](#))

Climate mitigation. Reducing the flow of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, either by reducing sources of them or enhancing the “sinks” that accumulate and store them. ([NASA, 2024](#))

Enteric fermentation/ruminant eructation. The digestive process of animals that releases methane (CH₄), a potent greenhouse gas as a by-product. ([CGIAR](#))

Food environment. The consumer interface with the food system that encompasses the availability, affordability, convenience, and desirability of foods. ([Downs et al., 2020](#))

Greenhouse effect. The process by which heat-trapping gases in the Earth’s atmosphere absorb infrared radiation from the sun, reflect some of it back into space, and emit some of it toward the Earth. ([UN-REDD](#))

Nudging. Any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people’s behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008)

Pollinator-dependent crops. Plant species intended for human consumption that rely on biotic agents—primarily insects, birds, and other animals—to transfer pollen for maximal fertilization and fruit or seed production. ([Aizen et al., 2009](#); [Ritchie, 2021](#))

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