

THE TRUTH ABOUT **PASTA**



One food, one love

PASTA IS GOOD FOR THE EARTH A SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Pasta is more than just delicious; it's also sustainable — produced with less of an impact on the environment than a lot of other foods.

Today, experts including the [Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations](#) are recognizing the importance of linking food production/consumption and sustainability. This approach is gaining momentum internationally. For example:

- New dietary **recommendations** from the Dutch government recommend slashing meat consumption by almost half for reasons of health and sustainability.
- Other countries like **Brazil** and the **United Kingdom** have incorporated sustainability into their dietary guidelines, encouraging more plant foods (like pasta), and fewer animal foods (like meat and dairy).
- While sustainability was not included in the 2015 U.S. Dietary Guidelines, a **national poll** from the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future found that 74% of Americans say dietary guidelines should include sustainability measures, and that 92% believe that producing food in a sustainable way is a high priority.
- Through its [Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe](#), the European Union adjusted its dietary recommendations to less animal-based and more plant-based foods.¹ Additionally, [LiveWell for LIFE](#) demonstrates how low-carbon, healthy diets can help achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the EU food supply chain.

¹ Rockstrom, J., Willett, W., Stordalen, G., "An American Plate That is Palatable for Human and Planetary Health," Huffington Post, March 26, 2015.



International Pasta Organisation

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We are learning that the health of our bodies is greatly intertwined with the health of the planet, and pasta is a prime example of this relationship.

Here's why:

- It's one of the least intensive foods to produce
- Pasta is more energy dense than fruits and vegetables, which are harder to grow, transport and store year-round
- It discourages food waste by turning a hodgepodge of leftover vegetables and food scraps into a hearty, gourmet meal

As the planet continues to move toward climate uncertainty, food choices will need to make the best use of the earth's precious resources.

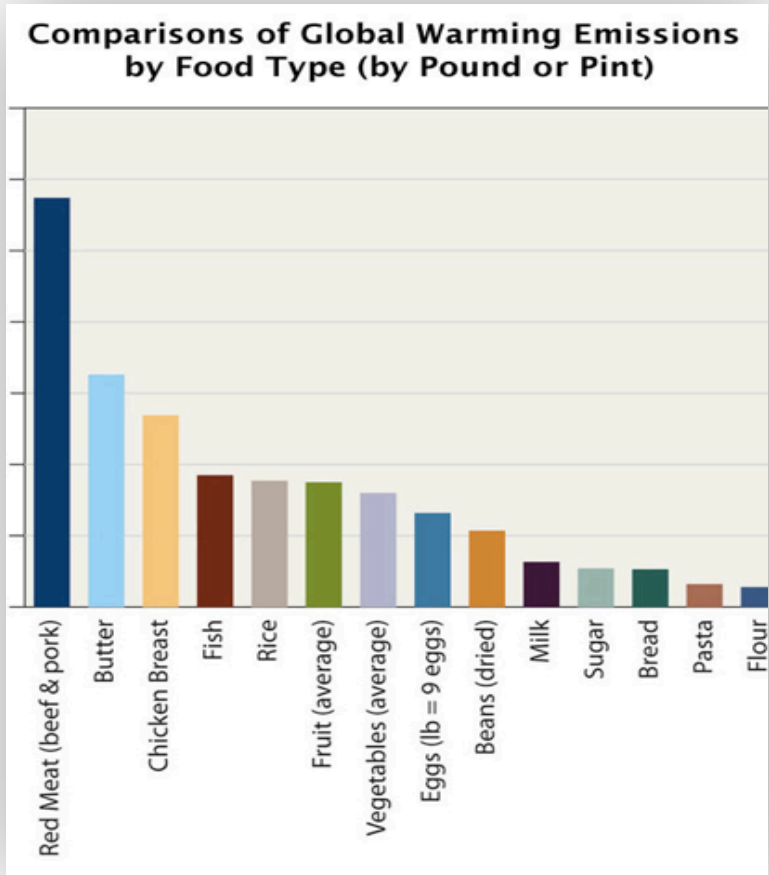
The experts say...

- Pasta is the perfect, environmentally friendly pick. Research published in [Ecosystems](#) found that grains (like the wheat used to make pasta) use only 0.51 liters of water to produce 1 calorie of food.
- Similarly, the carbon footprint of pasta is only 15.5 oz CO₂eq/lb (34.44g CO₂eq/kg), much lower than many other foods.
- At the **2015 Healthy Pasta Meals Scientific Consensus meeting**, organized by the nonprofit Oldways, nutrition experts added a new point to the Scientific Consensus statement, declaring that "pasta is a simple plant based food, and has a low environmental impact."
- The [Union of Concerned Scientists \(UCS\) reached a similar conclusion](#), noting that while locally grown foods are a sustainable choice, "there are more-effective ways to reduce global warming emissions through dietary changes," such as by choosing low emission foods like pasta. The Union of Concerned Scientists' data singles out pasta as a low emission food.
- According to **Duncan Williamson** of the World Wildlife Foundation, pasta has a high "sustainability index," and good taste and food for the earth can go hand in hand. According to Williamson, healthy pasta meals are an affordable way to embrace more sustainable diets, like the Mediterranean Diet as "Traditional ways of eating are more sustainable and less expensive."



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Source: [Union of Concerned Scientists](#)



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Taking it to the Table

In [Cooking Light](#) magazine, First Lady Michelle Obama, a mother of two and a well known sustainable food advocate, shared her recipe for [One-Pot Pasta with Spinach and Tomatoes](#), a healthy, energy saving pasta meal. This environmentally friendly dish requires less energy and less water because it uses one pot instead of at least two (no pouring water down the drain or dirtying extra pots and pans) and is made from scratch with fresh produce. “It’s some tomatoes ... basil. It’s boiling pasta ... a little flavoring and seasoning, and you have a delicious meal.” And, “It’s fast,” she says.

Many agree that pasta is good for people and the planet. Here are some reasons why:

- Made from durum wheat semolina or from the flour of other grains mixed with water and/or eggs, pasta is nutritious by itself.
- Mixed with other healthful foods like olive oil, tomato sauce, vegetables, beans, seafood and lean meats, pasta is a key ingredient of healthful, traditional eating plans, like the Mediterranean Diet.
- Few foods boast a “sustainability index” as high as pasta. In all steps of the food supply chain, pasta is sustainable: from wheat harvesting to pasta production to preparation at home and package disposal. Pasta life cycle analysis shows that from farm to table, the environmental impact of pasta is quite low. In other words, eating a plate of pasta means choosing a food produced in full respect for the environment.^{2 3 4 5}
- Grains are the most important source of food worldwide, providing nearly 50 percent of the calories eaten, and are some of the least environmentally intensive foods to produce.⁶

² Baroni, L., Cenci, L., Tettamanti, M. Berati, M. Evaluating the environmental impact of various dietary patterns combined with different food production systems. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (2006) 1-8

³ FAO (2012) Sustainable Diets and Biodiversity

⁴ Scarborough P. et al, 2014. Dietary greenhouse gas emissions of meat-eaters, fish-eaters, vegetarians and vegans in the U.K, *Climatic Change* (2014)

⁵ BCFN (2012). Double Pyramid 2012: enabling sustainable food choices

⁶ http://wholegrainscouncil.org/files/2014wgcBBconf_BarriersMyths.pdf P. 11



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Continuing the Tradition

All across the globe, pasta has a centuries-old tradition of being the original “kitchen sink” meal—a perfect way to transform leftover vegetables, cheeses, and other ingredients into a satisfying, complete dish. Our ancestors were far less wasteful than we are today, and pasta certainly made their job easier. Whether it was combined with olive oil, greens, and tomatoes in the Mediterranean, or soy and vegetables in China, pasta has long been a delicious way to make precious foodstuffs stretch into multiple meals, without letting food go to waste. As sustainable food systems and waste reduction capture public attention, pasta will no doubt continue the tradition as a healthy and sustainable food staple.

For additional resources on sustainability, health, recipes and more from the International Pasta Organisation, please visit the [Pasta For All web site](#).

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