



Australians' eating habits and the changes needed for a healthier and more sustainable diet

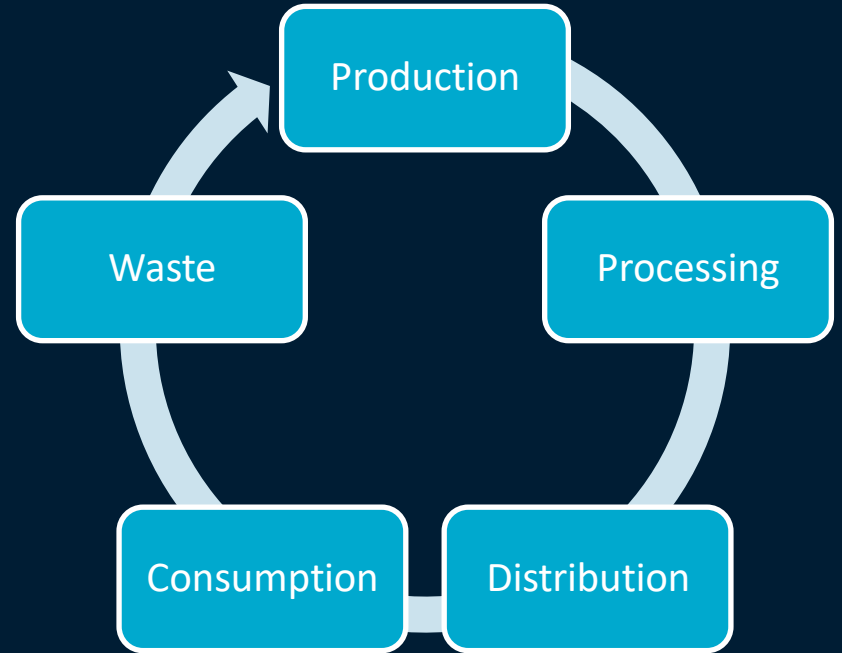
Gilly Hendrie | November 2023

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands that we are all meeting on today, and pay my respect to their Elders past and present.



Sustainable food system

- Food system is complex, involving the production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste of food.
- A sustainable food system enhances the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health for all.



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.”

Ref: [FAO Dietary guidelines and sustainability](#) | [Food-based dietary guidelines](#) | [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(fao.org\)](#)

Food-based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs)

- Designed to influence policies that shape the food system and population diets
- Traditionally they provide health oriented advice
- Opportunity to highlight the synergies between human and planetary health

Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council
Department of Health and Ageing

www.eatforhealth.gov.au

Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day.
Drink plenty of water.

Vegetables and legumes/beans

Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties

Fruit

Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat

Use small amounts


Only sometimes and in small amounts

CSIRO

What are Australians currently eating?

CSIRO Healthy Diet Score survey

TOTAL WELLBEING DIET | The Diet > Results > Pricing > Resources > Login | [Free Weight Loss Quiz](#) | [Join Now](#)



What's Your Healthy Diet Score?

Take the **Healthy Diet Score** quiz now to see how your eating habits compare to the rest of the nation

Get started - it only takes 5 mins!

First name Email Mobile (optional)

I am 18 years+ and consent to receiving the latest expert advice, inspiration and special offers from CSIRO Total Wellbeing Diet. This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

[Start free survey](#)

CSIRO Healthy Diet Score

How does your diet measure up? Complete the free CSIRO Healthy Diet Score survey to assess the quality of your diet and help improve your eating habits.

[CONTACT](#) | [SHARE](#) | [f](#) | [t](#) | [in](#) | [✉](#)

Put your diet to the test

Consider yourself a healthy eater? Now, you can take a scientifically validated test to find out for sure.

The [CSIRO Healthy Diet Score](#) is a free online assessment tool developed by our scientists in collaboration with [Digital Wellness](#).

It's designed to assess the quality of your own diet against Australia's healthy eating guidelines and can help you improve your eating habits based on your results.

The free CSIRO Healthy Diet Score survey includes:

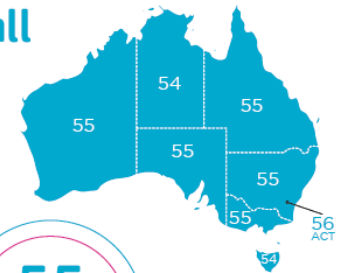


Overall diet quality is poor

- Average score is 55 / 100.
- Discretionary foods, dairy, healthy fats and vegetables are furthest from guidelines.

Aussie diet downfall

Australia is failing when it comes to a healthy diet. Of the **235,000** adults who completed the **CSIRO Healthy Diet Score** survey between 2015-2023, the average score was **55/100**



Worse than ever

The diet score has decreased slightly from 56 in 2015 to 53 in 2023.

Consumption categories high to low: SCORES OUT OF 100

	Beverages	93	GOOD
	Meat and alternatives	78	
	Breads and cereals	70	
	Variety	65	
	Fruit	60	
	Vegetables	58	POOR
	Healthy fats	49	
	Dairy and alternatives	38	
	Discretionary	20	

Age matters

- 53** **18 - 50 years**
Age group with the lowest average diet score
- 60** **Over 70s**
Average diet score increased with age



Gender gap

53 **MEN**
Average diet score of Australian males

56 **WOMEN**
Average diet score of Australian females

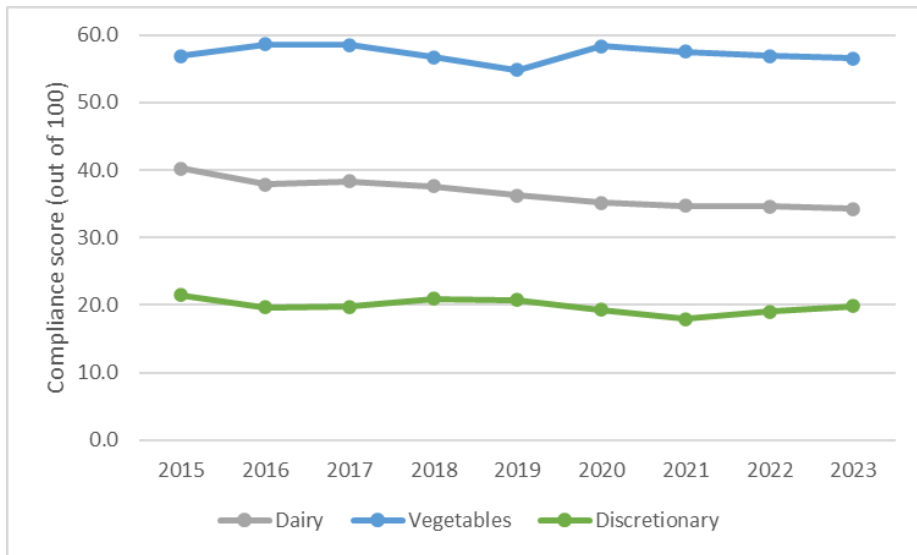
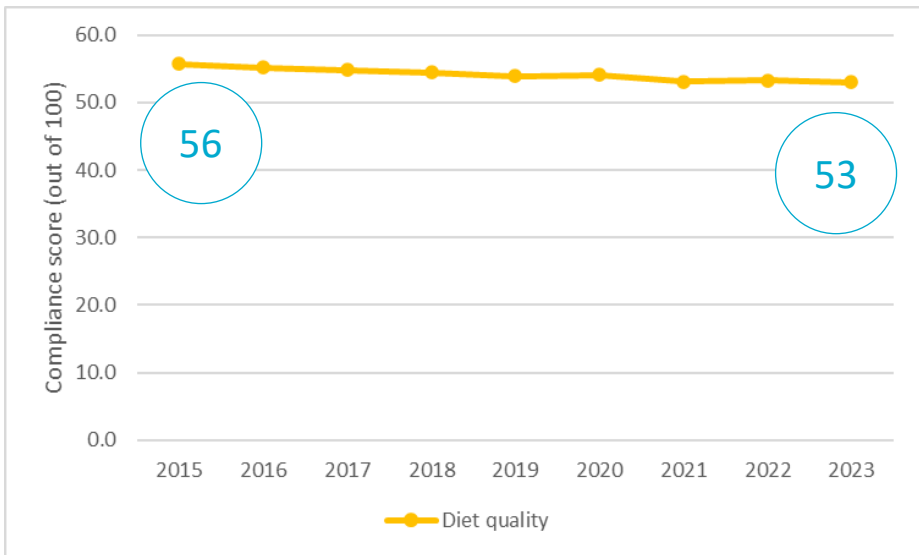
Women scored better than men on most diet components with the greatest difference in vegetable consumption - **62 women vs 54 men**

Job impact

59 **RETIRED AND HEALTH INDUSTRY**
Occupations with the highest average diet score

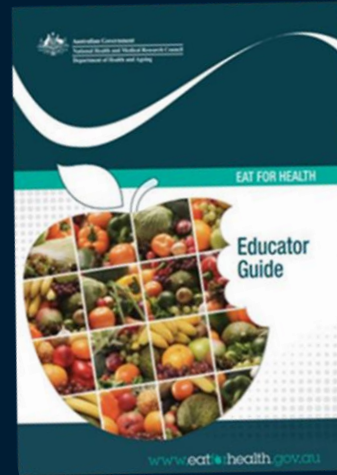
51 **CONSTRUCTION AND UNEMPLOYED**
Occupations with the lowest average diet score

Persistent challenge to change eating habits



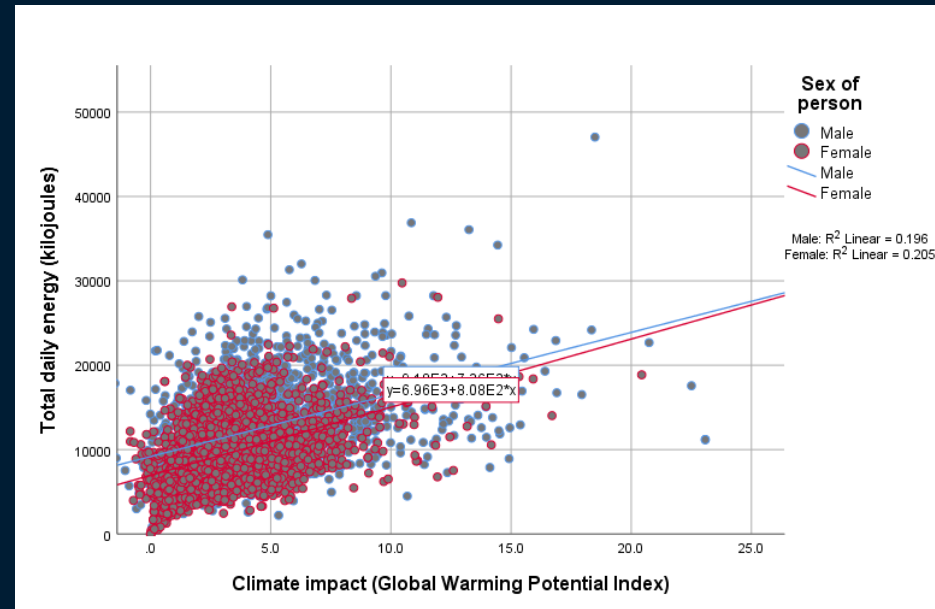
How do Australians achieve a healthier and more sustainable diet?

1. Eat to our energy needs
2. Consume a wide variety of foods
3. Eat a balance of foods across food groups



Consume energy to meet our needs

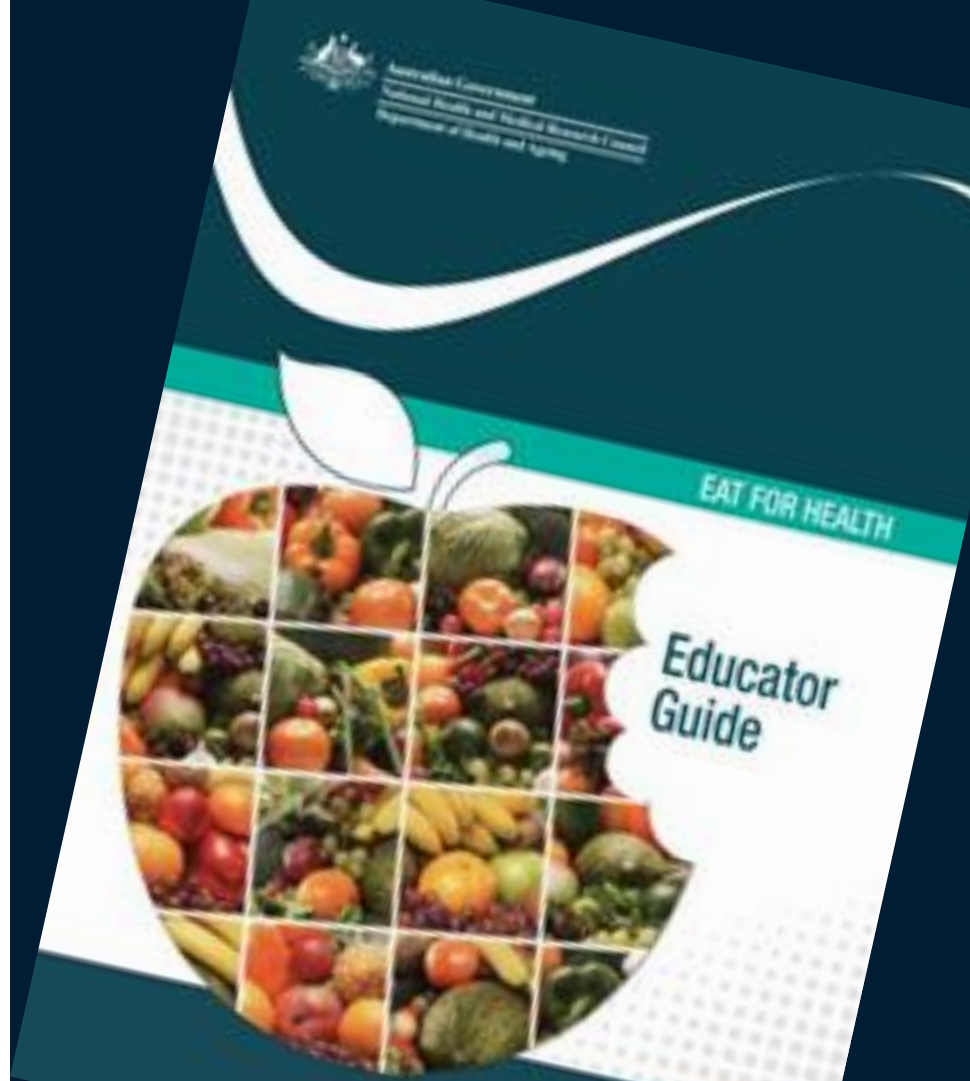
- All foods have some degree of impact on the environment.
- However, we require adequate energy to maintain health.
- Correlation between total energy intake and dietary environmental impacts.
- Limit overconsumption of kilojoules.



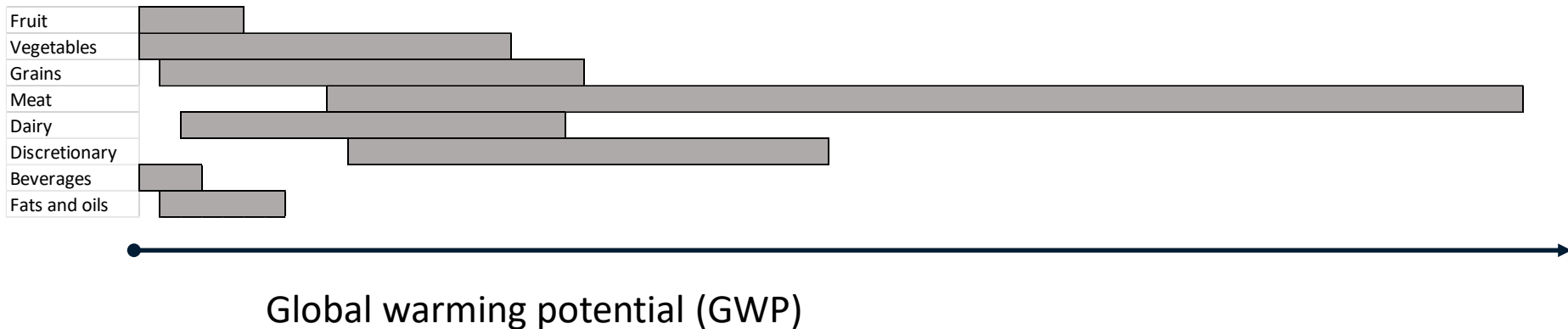
Ref: Ridoutt, Baird, Hendrie (2021) Diets within environmental limits: The climate impact of current and recommended Australian Diets. Nutrients.

Importance of variety

- Variety is promoted throughout the Australia Dietary Guidelines
- Promote a variety of “*different types and colours*” of vegetables and “*the wide variety of foods*” within the meat and alternatives group.



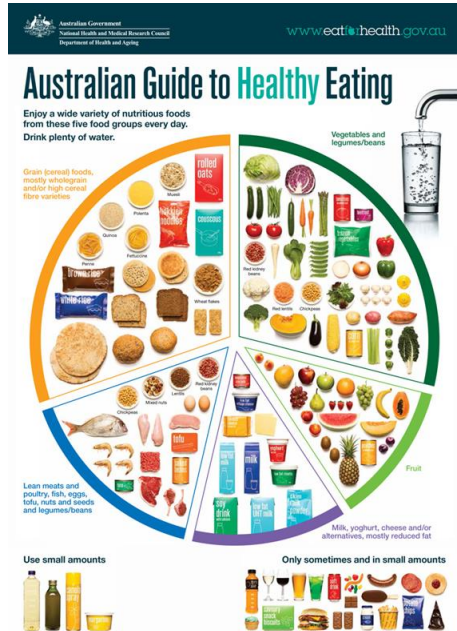
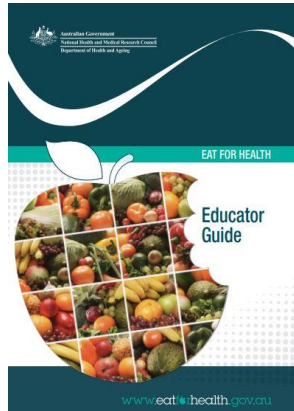
Variety of food choices within food groups can also influence environmental impacts of diets



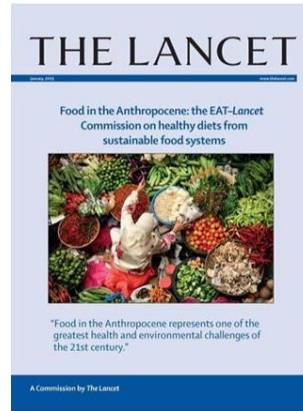
CSIRO

How does the balance of food groups compare to guidelines?

National: Australian Guide to Healthy Eating (2013)

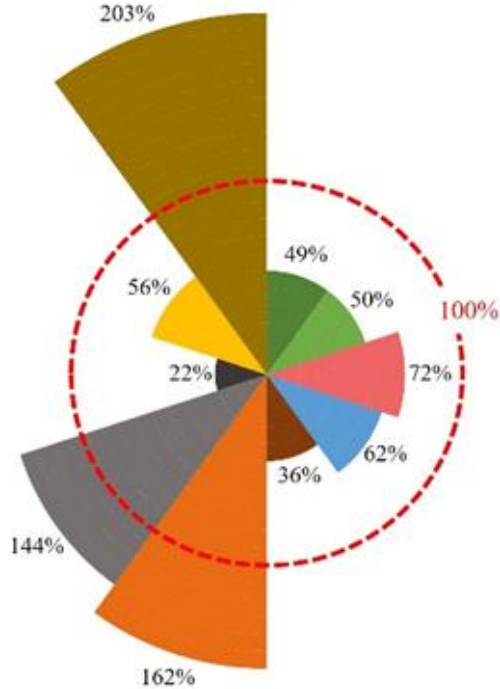


Global: EAT Lancet Planetary Health Diet (2019)

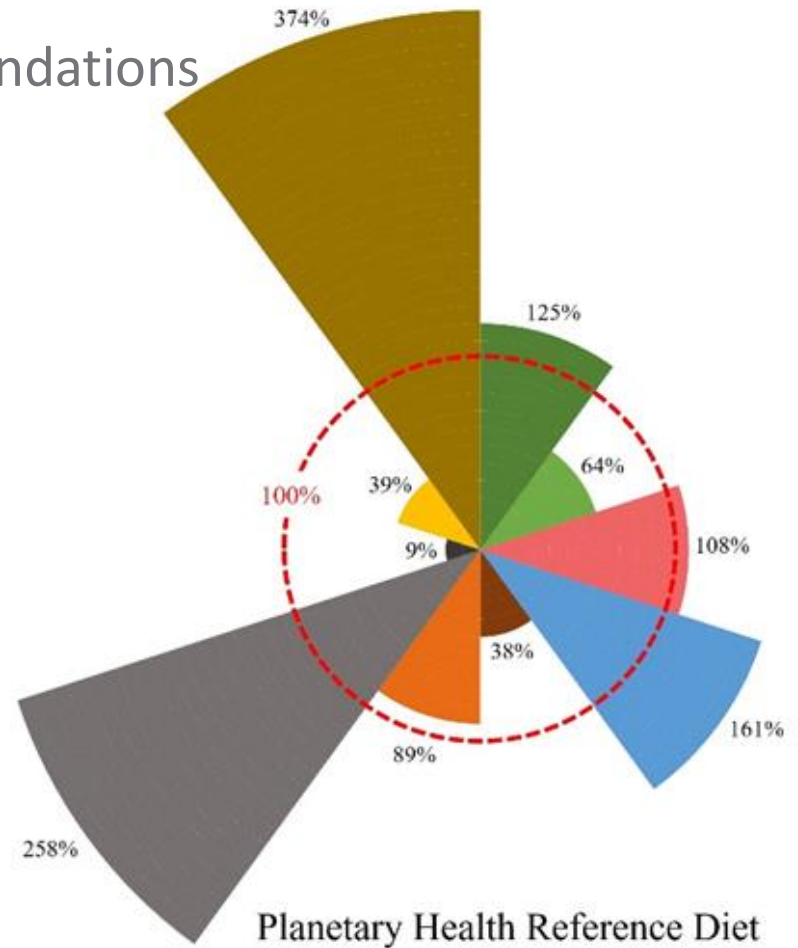


Comparison of Australian diets to recommendations

- Starchy vegetables
- Other vegetables
- Fruit
- Dairy
- Wholegrains
- Refined grains
- Animal based meat and alternatives
- Plant based alternatives
- Unsaturated fats
- Discretionary choices

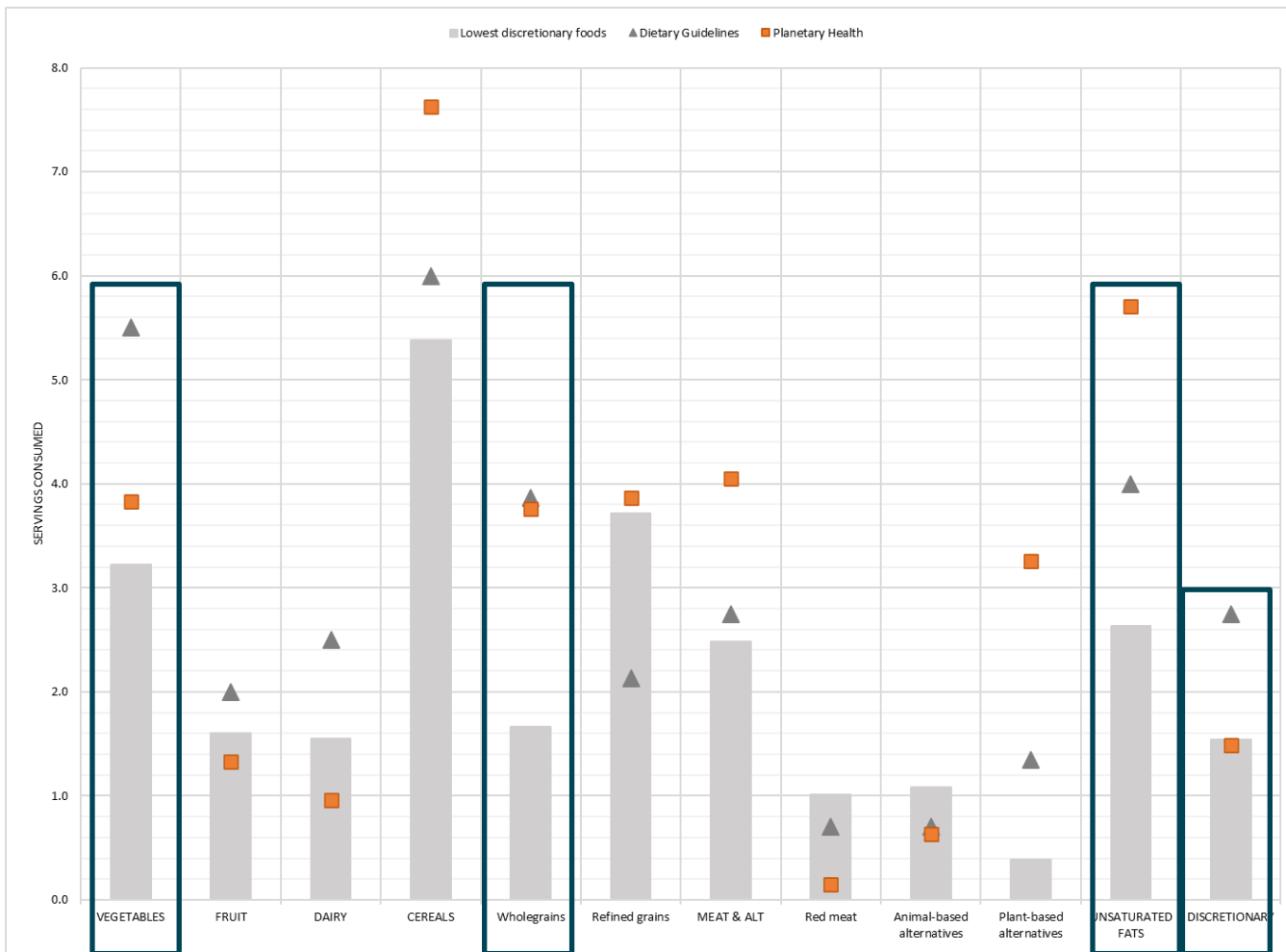


Australian Dietary Guidelines

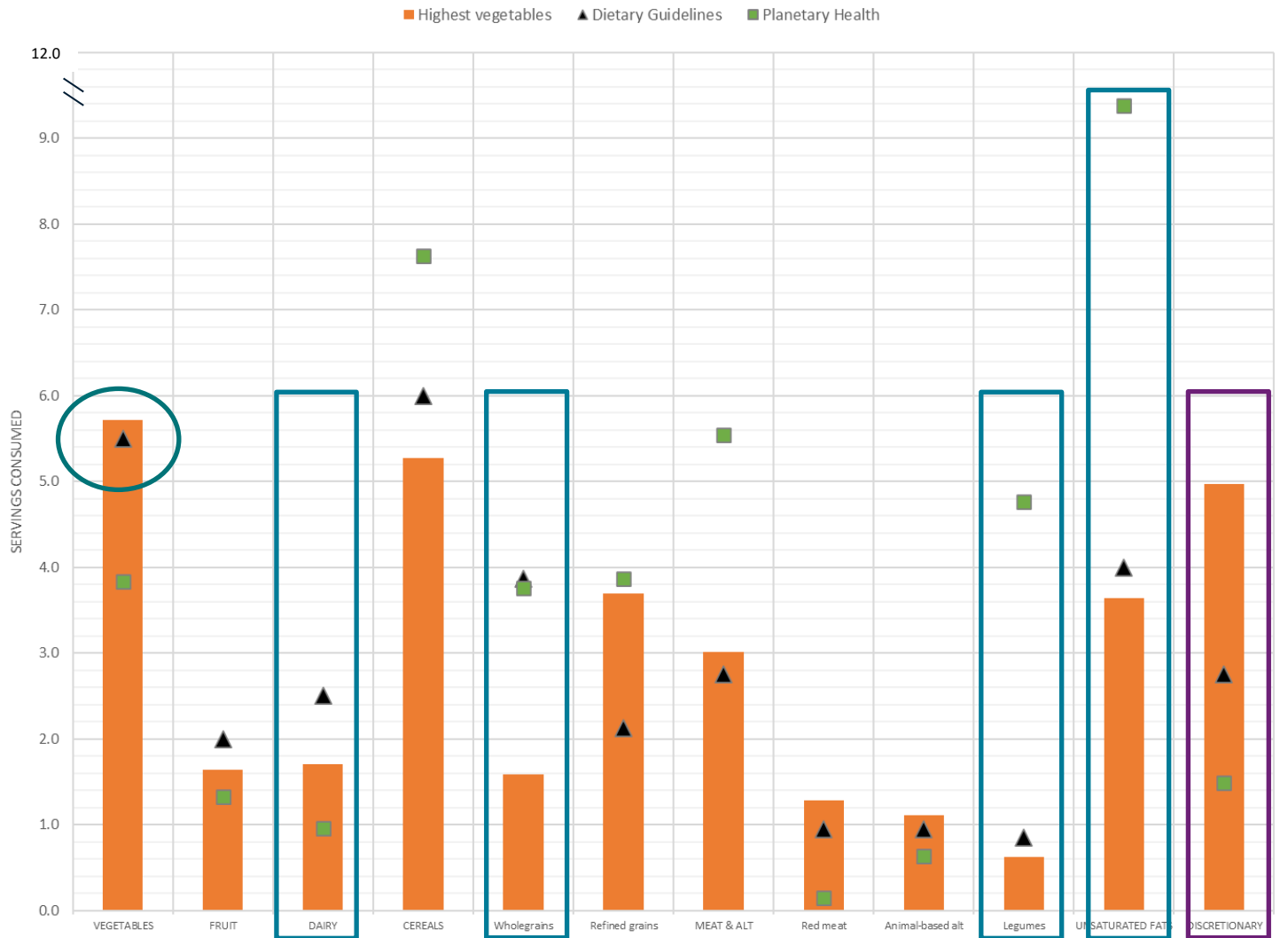


Planetary Health Reference Diet

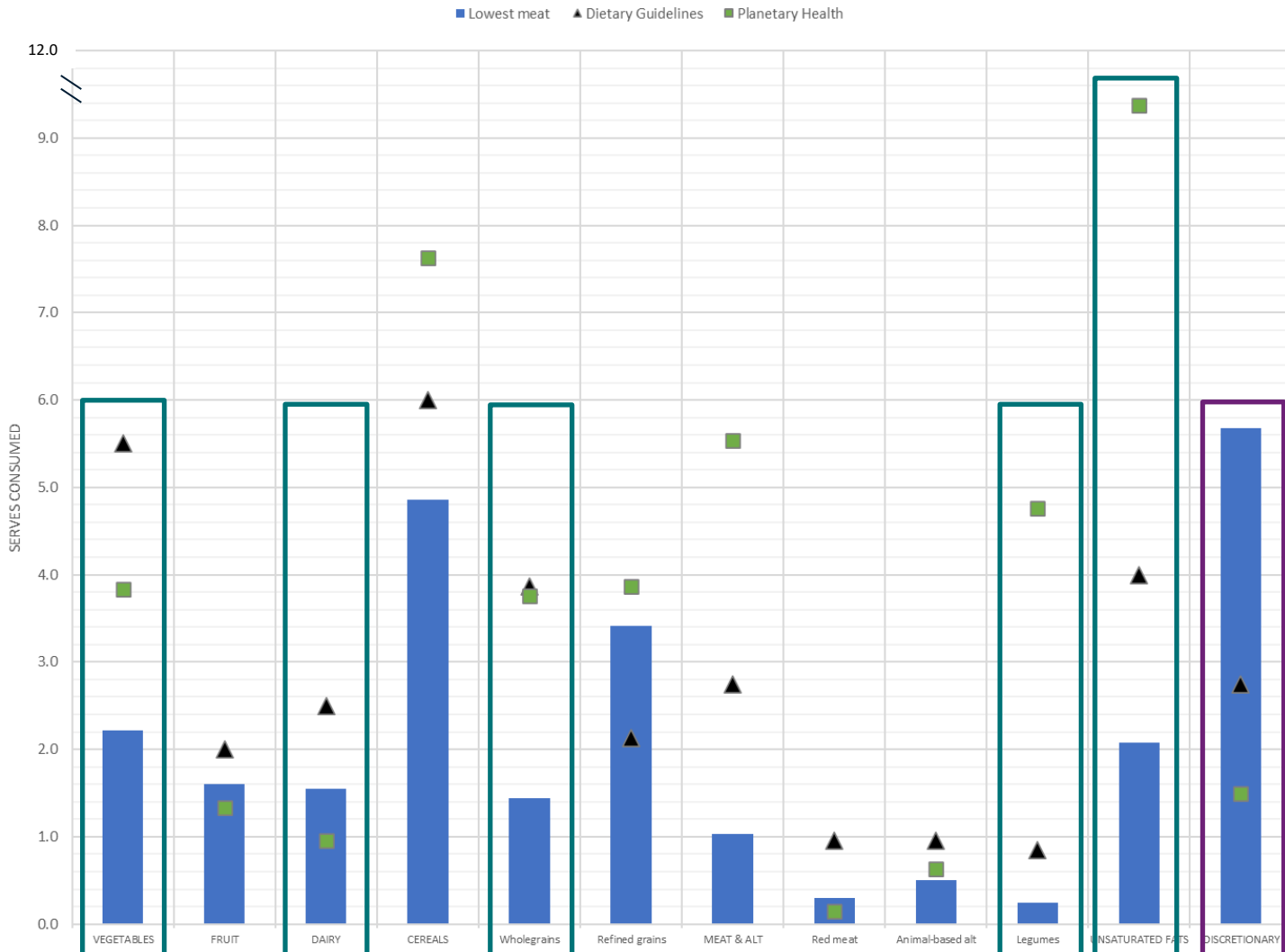
Lowest discretionary food intake pattern



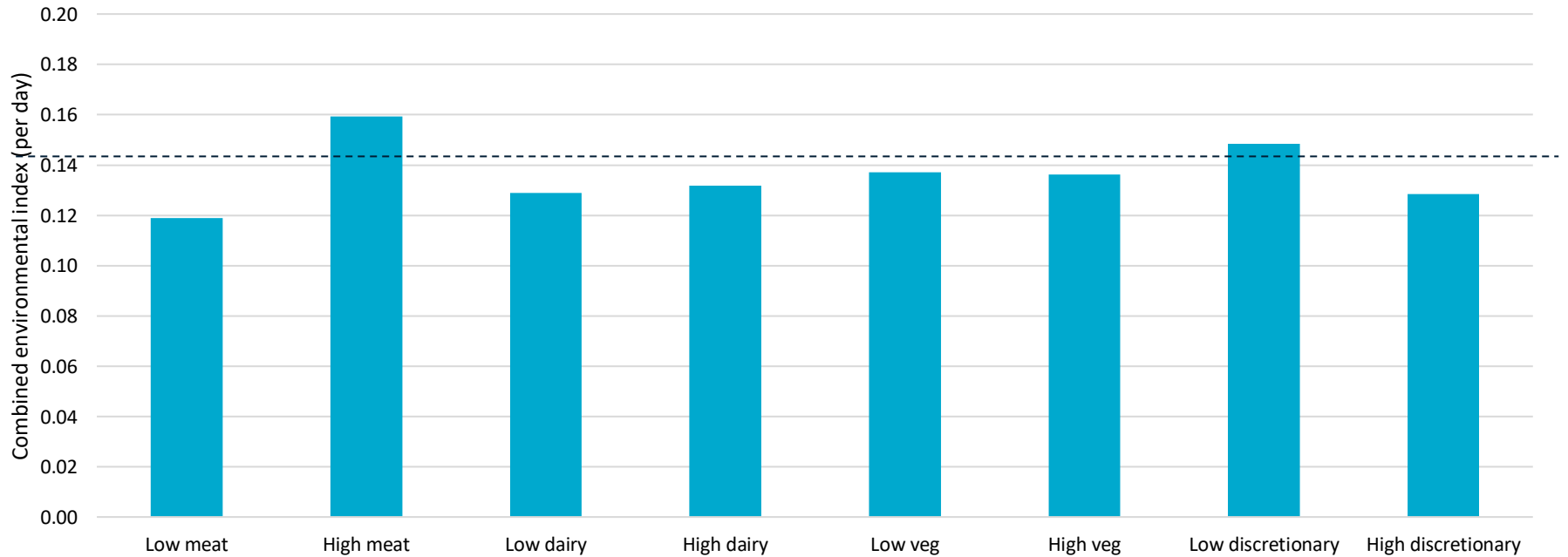
Highest veg consumers

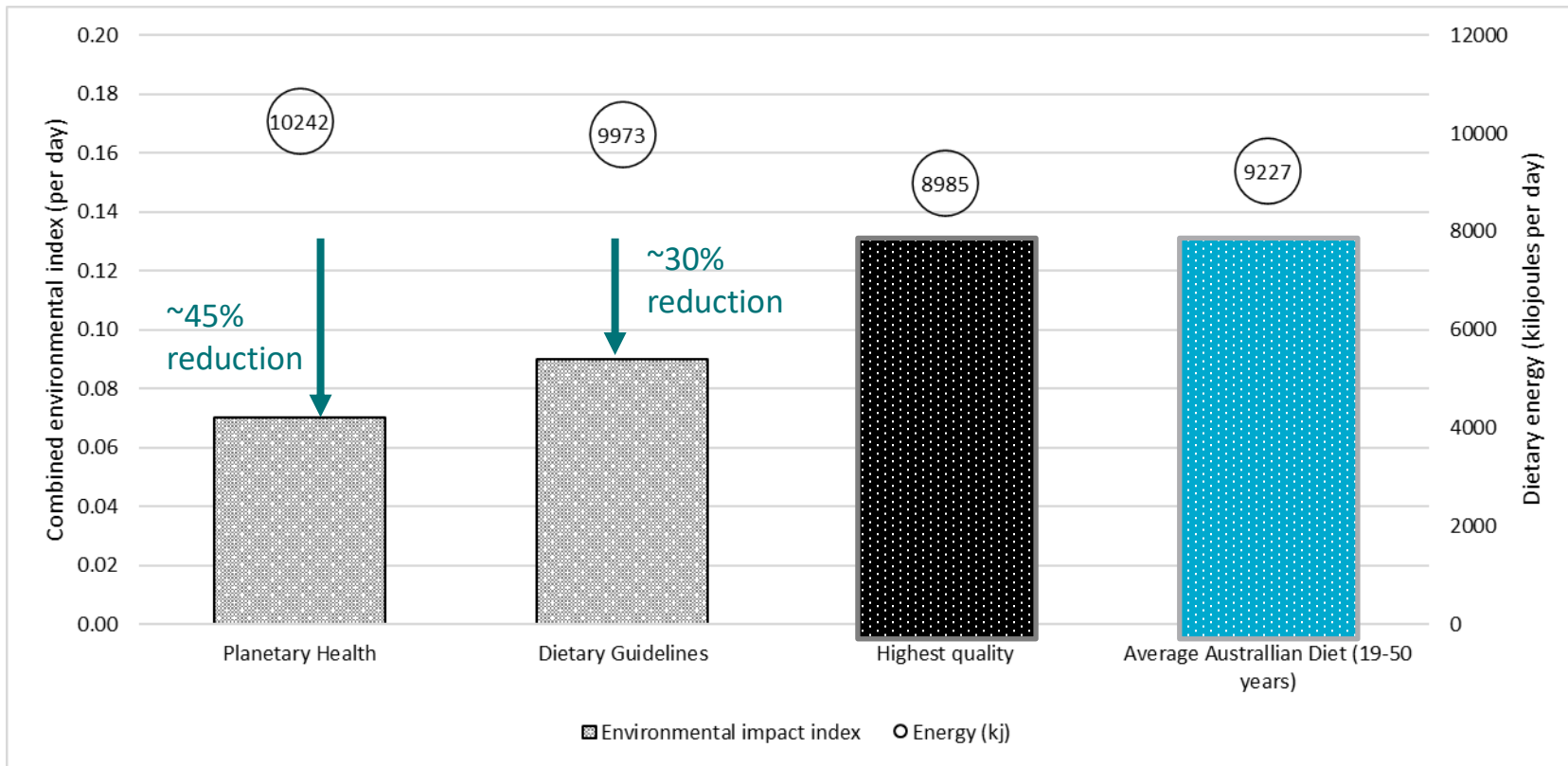


Lowest meat consumers



Environmental impacts of dietary patterns





Achieving healthier, more sustainable diets

- Widespread changes are needed to improve eating habits
- Choose a nutrient dense diet with adequate, not excessive, kilojoules
- Adjust the balance of food groups to be more in line with recommendations
- Focus on variety, not too dependent on any one food group
- Focusing on changing one aspect of diet doesn't necessarily mean a healthier dietary pattern overall