

How Environmentally Sustainable Are Your Eating Habits?

Start

Have you ever wondered how environmentally sustainable your food is? Answer all the questions, keep track of your points and then use the traffic light system to find out how environmentally sustainable your meal is!

Question 3

Is the packaging used to transport your food recyclable, reusable or biodegradable?

- 10- all packaging is recyclable, reusable or biodegradable
- 5- some packaging is recyclable, reusable or biodegradable
- 0- no packaging is recyclable, reusable or biodegradable

In the UK, recycling saves around 15 million tonnes of carbon emissions a year, the equivalent of taking 3.5 million cars off the road.

Question 1

What category does your meal best fit into? If your meal contains two or more of the following, select the one with the lowest score.

- 15- vegan dish/fully plant based
- 10- vegetarian dish/items derived from animals (i.e., milk, eggs, cheese)
- 5- meal contains white meat and fish
- 0- meal contains red meat

According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation, the world's livestock sector is responsible for 18% of total greenhouse gas emissions and thus consuming more plant-based food, which typically have a lower environmental impact, can promote a more environmentally sustainable diet.

Question 4

Does your meal contain any organically produced items?

- 10- all items are organically produced
- 5- some items are organically produced
- 0- no items are organically produced

Research shows that organic farms use up to 70% less energy per unit of production than conventional farms, primarily because of the different fertilisers used.

Question 2

Are any of the food items within your meal seasonally produced? Seasonally produced food can be defined as food that is grown outdoors during the natural growing period for the country in which it is produced.

- 10- all seasonally produced
- 5- some items seasonally produced
- 0- no items seasonally produced

Seasonally produced food reduces greenhouse gas emissions due to the lack of additional energy used in the growing process, such as artificial heating and lighting in greenhouses needed to produce food out of the natural growing season.

To find out what food is in season scan the QR code:



Top Tip

The Planetary Health Diet, the optimally designed diet for both people and the planet, recommends a consumption level of no more than 98 grams of red meat, 203 grams of poultry and 196 grams of fish per person per week. If you frequently eat animal products think carefully about the quantity you are consuming.

Question 5

Your food may have travelled many miles to get to your plate. Using information on the packaging or your own knowledge, which of the following best describes your meal in relation to food miles?

- 20- all or most food is homegrown or locally sourced within Fife
- 15- all or most food items have been sourced from Scotland
- 10- all or most food items have been sourced from the rest of the UK
- 5- all or most food items have been sourced from Europe
- 0- all or most food items have been sourced from the rest of the world

Top Tip

Challenge yourself to cook one 'local' meal per week using food solely composed of local ingredients. Consuming locally produced food can greatly reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions produced during food transport and can also support the local economy.

Question 7

Which of the following best describes how you can/do dispose of, or repurpose, your food waste?

- 10- all food waste is compostable or can be reused
- 5- some food waste is compostable or can be reused
- 0- no food waste is compostable or can be reused

When compostable waste goes to a landfill it can produce methane, a greenhouse gas 80 times more powerful than carbon dioxide at warming the earth. Correctly recycling or reusing food waste can greatly contribute to environmental sustainability.

Question 6

Now that you've cooked and enjoyed your meal, how much food is left on your plate?

- 10- everything has been eaten
- 5- most of the meal has been eaten
- 0- little to half of the meal has been eaten

One-third of global edible food, equivalent to 1.3 billion metric tonnes, is wasted every year. If we stop wasting food we could reduce global human induced greenhouse gas emissions by 8%.

Top Tip

Think twice about the attractiveness of quantity discounts at the point of purchase. The average UK household discards over 1/3 of the food they buy, so buying and cooking less can help to reduce your food waste.



0-35 points- Your food consumption patterns are harmful to the environment.



36-60 points- Your food consumption patterns have a moderate environmental impact.



61-85 points- Great news, you are contributing to more sustainable eating practices!

Why does eating 'sustainably' matter?

The environmental impact of the food system is multi-dimensional, with implications for climate change, water scarcity, land use change and biodiversity loss. Thus, sustainable food consumption is a critical component for tackling climate change and wider environmental issues.

How can I eat more sustainably?

Assessing the total environmental impact of food items across the entire lifecycle of a product is extremely complex and often an impossible task! Following these 7 simple questions and trying to maximise your number of points is a great starting point for eating a more sustainable diet.