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The Chilean Diet: Is it sustainable?

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Food systems are one of the main contributors to climate change. Sustainable diets are one strategy to mitigate climate change.

Assessments and estimations at a national level are lacking, especially in the Global South, probably due to a lack of national surveys of food consumption and a limited interest in sustainable diets information. The objective of this study is to estimate and describe the carbon and water footprint of the Chilean population's diet in an overall estimation desegregated by region, age, sex, socioeconomic level and their main characterizations. This study is based on a secondary data analysis from the National Survey of Food Consumption made in 2010. The carbon and water footprint of the food subgroups/person/day were estimated. The results are compared by sex, age group, socioeconomic level and macro zone. A carbon footprint of 4.67 kg CO₂eq and a water footprint of 4177 L, both per person/day, were obtained. Animal-sourced foods, such as dairy and red meat, were responsible for 60.5% of the total carbon footprint and 52.6% of the water footprint. The highest values for both footprints were found in the following groups: men, adolescents, young adults, people with a higher socioeconomic level and residents in the southern area of the country. The carbon footprint and water footprint values in Chile generated by food consumption would be above the world averages. Transforming the Chilean food system into a more sustainable one with changes in eating patterns is urgently required to attain this transformation.



Figure 3. The “diet gap” between current Chilean dietary patterns and the Planetary health diet defined by EAT-Lancet Commission [4]. The Health boundary is a target defined as the safe operating space for food systems, human health, and environmental sustainability. Food groups outside this health boundary are unsustainable. Graphic credit to <http://www.eatforum.org> (accessed on 4 July 2022).

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Biography

Teresita Gormaz successfully completed the Master of Nutrition and Food by defending her thesis called: "Environmental impact of Chilean food." Her guiding professors were Professor Gerardo Weisstaub, from the INTA Public Nutrition Unit and Professor Sandra Cortés, from the Pontifical Catholic University.

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