

A healthy diet, according to a study, leads to a healthy world.

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Introduction

A cluster of fishing communities dots the Kenyan coast at Kilifi, north of Mombasa. Parrot fish, octopus, and other tasty species can be found in the seas. Despite their proximity to the sea, the youngsters in the villages rarely consume fish. The majority of their nourishment comes from plants, and their basic meal is ugali, which is maize (corn) flour combined with water. Almost half of the children in this city have stunted growth, which is twice the national average [1].

Lora Iannotti, a public-health researcher at Washington University in St. Louis, and her Kenyan colleagues wondered why the children in the villages weren't eating seafood, despite the fact that all of the parents were fishermen. Studies show that fish and other animal-source foods can help children grow faster. The parents explained that selling their catch was a better financial decision than eating it.

As a result, Iannotti and her colleagues are conducting a scientific study. Fishermen have been handed modified traps with small apertures to allow baby fish to escape. Over time, this should improve reproduction and the health of overfished ocean and reef habitats, as well as increase revenues, according to Iannotti. Then, for half of the households, community health workers use home visits, cooking demonstrations, and messaging to encourage parents to feed their children more fish, particularly abundant and quickly-growing local species like 'tafi,' or white spotted rabbitfish, and octopus. The researchers will monitor whether children from these homes eat better and grow taller than youngsters from families who do not hear the messages. The experiment's goal, according to Iannotti, is to figure out "which marine foods we can choose that are both beneficial for the environment and nutritious for our diet." She adds that the planned diet must also be culturally acceptable and inexpensive [2].

Iannotti is grappling with issues that have piqued the interest of scholars, the United Nations, international financiers, and many countries seeking diets that are beneficial for both people and the environment. Over 2 billion individuals, especially in the Western world, are overweight or obese. At the same time, 811 million people, largely in low- and middle-income countries, are not obtaining enough calories or nutrition. In 2017, unhealthy diets caused more deaths worldwide than any other factor, including smoking. According to the UN Food

and Agriculture Organization, meat, dairy, and egg production would need to increase by 44 percent by 2050 as the world's population continues to grow and more people begin to eat like Westerners (FAO) [3].

Along with the health implications, this creates an environmental issue. Our existing industrialised food system is responsible for around a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions. It also consumes 70% of freshwater and occupies 40% of land, and relies on nitrogen and phosphorus fertilisers, which disrupt nitrogen and phosphorus cycling and are responsible for much of the pollution in rivers and beaches.

Emissions on the menu

Producing food emits so much greenhouse gas that even if countries cut all non-food emissions to zero, they still wouldn't be able to keep temperature rises below 1.5 degrees Celsius, as set out in the Paris Agreement. Because animals are inefficient at converting feed to food, the livestock supply chain accounts for a considerable percentage of the food system's emissions (30–50%, according to some estimates) [4].

Rich diets

Most customers do not adhere to dietary requirements, according to nutritionists. As a result, several scientists are looking into ways to persuade individuals to eat healthy, sustainable diets. Patricia Eustachio Colombo, a nutrition expert at Stockholm's Karolinska Institute, and her colleagues are quietly experimenting with a sustainable diet in schools in Sweden. Their work is based on the New Nordic Diet, a social movement that began in Scandinavia and advocates the consumption of traditional, sustainable foods including seasonal vegetables and free-range meat [5].

References

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