



# A GLOBAL REVIEW OF FOOD-BASED DIETARY GUIDELINES

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## Food-based dietary guidelines



[Background](#)

[Regions](#)

[Resources](#)

[Capacity development](#)

**Food-based dietary guidelines** (also known as dietary guidelines) are intended to establish a basis for public food and nutrition, health and agricultural policies and nutrition education programmes to foster healthy eating habits and lifestyles. They provide advice on foods, food groups and dietary patterns to provide the required nutrients to the general public to promote overall health and prevent chronic diseases.



FAO assists Member Countries to develop, revise and implement food-based dietary guidelines and food guides in line with current scientific evidence. FAO also carries out periodic reviews on progress made in the development and use of dietary guidelines, tracking changes in their overall focus and orientation.

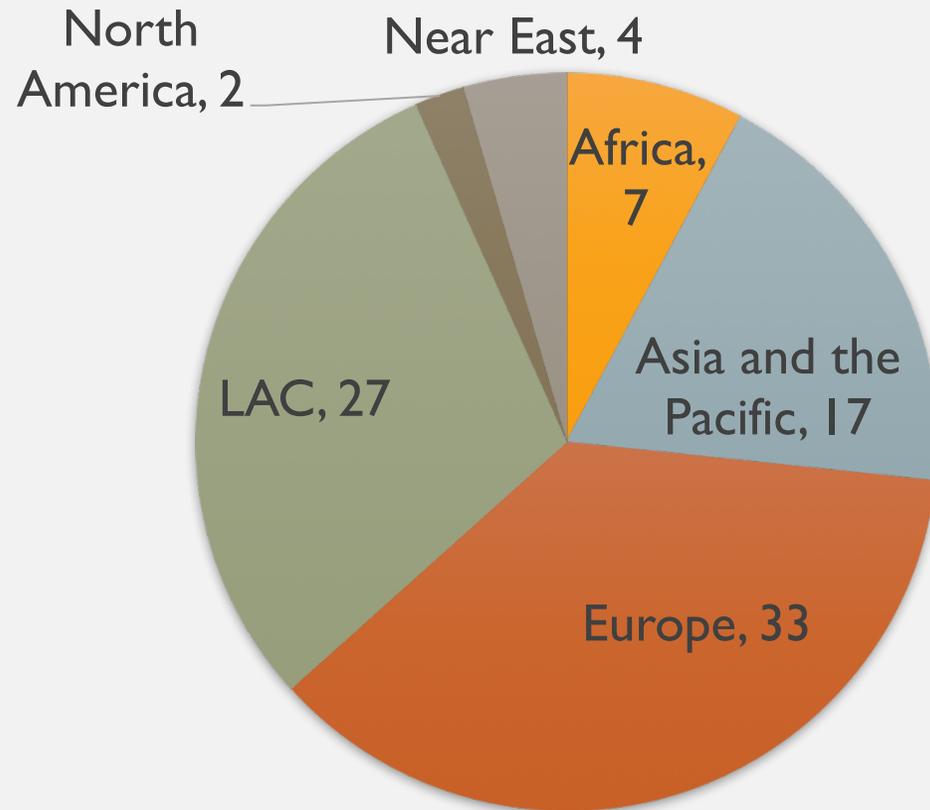
## OBJECTIVE

- To provide a concise, descriptive global review of current FBDG.
- To assess the level and type of concordance and differences across countries' existing guidance on key elements of a healthy diet.
- To evaluate the extent to which FBDG address existing recommendations articulated by WHO.

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# GEOGRAPHY OF FBDG

- FBDGs for the general population are available for 90 countries globally:



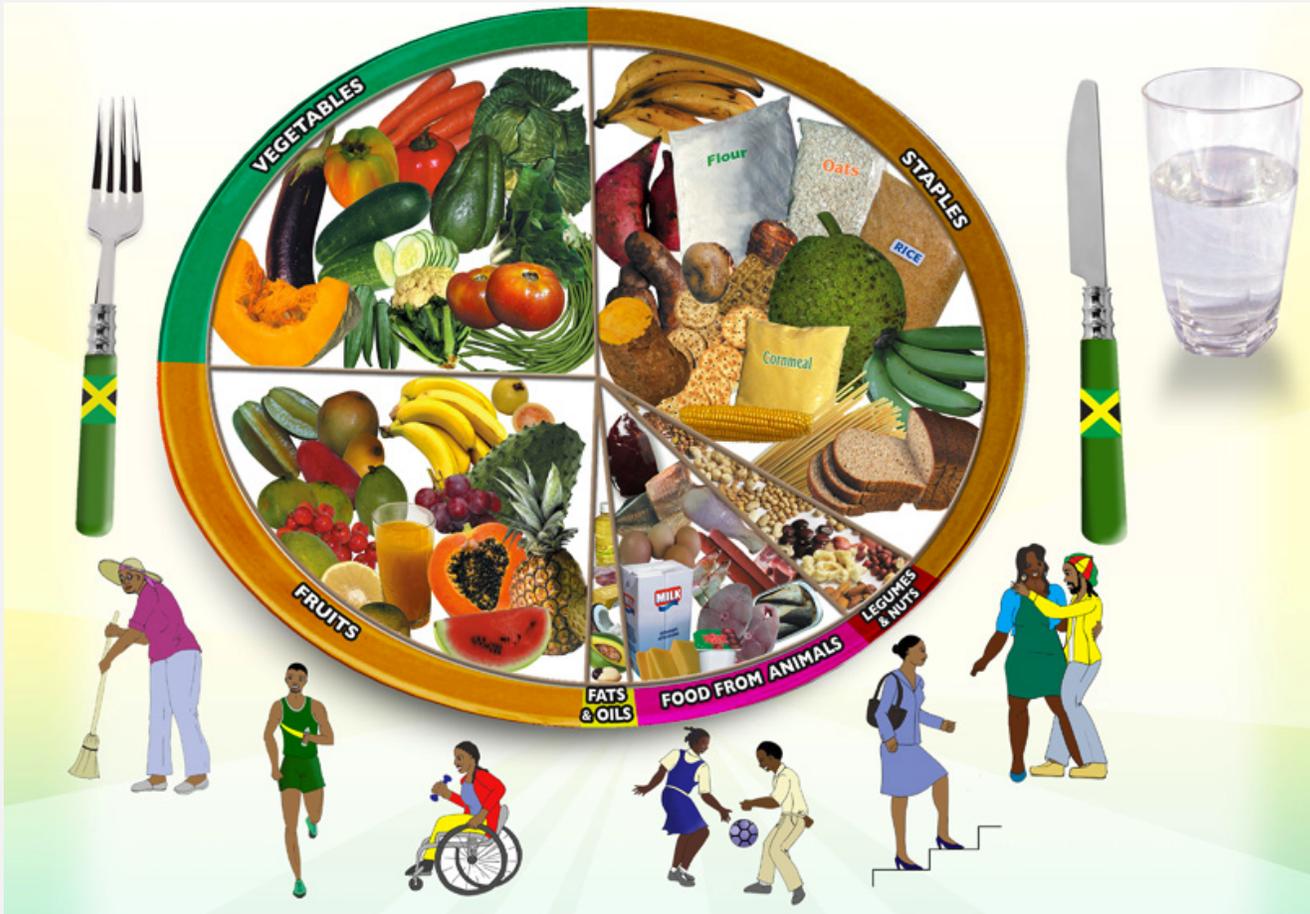
## CURRENT FBDG

- The year of publication of current versions ranges from 1986-2017
  - Mean = 2009
- Mean years since revision: 10
- 46% : first version
- UN agencies supported 42% to develop FBDG

## MOST COMMON GUIDANCE

- Consume a variety of foods
- Consume abundant fruits and vegetables
- Include starchy staples, legumes, and animal-source foods in the diet
- Limit sugar, fat, and salt.
- Consume some foods in higher proportion than others

# PROPORTIONALITY: VEG & FRUIT, STARCHY STAPLES



Jamaica



China

盐 油	25
奶及奶制品 大豆及坚果类	25
畜禽肉 水产品 蛋类	40 40 40
蔬菜类 水果类	300~ 200~
谷薯类 全谷物和杂豆 薯类	250~ 5 5
水	1500~1700

# GLOBAL AND NATIONAL FBDG COMPARISON

WHO	FBDG	%
A healthy diet contains <b>fruits and vegetables</b> At least 400 g (5 portions) of fruits and vegetables a day.	✓ (✓)	100 51
A healthy diet contains <b>whole grains</b>	(✓)	53
A healthy diet contains <b>legumes</b>	✓	96
A healthy diet contains <b>nuts</b>	X	36
Less than 30% of total energy intake from <b>fats</b> Unsaturated fats (e.g. found in fish, avocado, nuts, sunflower, canola and olive oils) are preferable to saturated fats (e.g. found in fatty meat, butter, palm and coconut oil, cream, cheese, ghee and lard).	✓ X	94 29
Less than 10% of total energy intake from free <b>sugars</b>	✓	94
Less than 5 g of <b>salt</b> (equivalent to approximately 1 teaspoon) per day and use iodized salt.	✓ X	91 18

## LESS HARMONIZED TOPICS

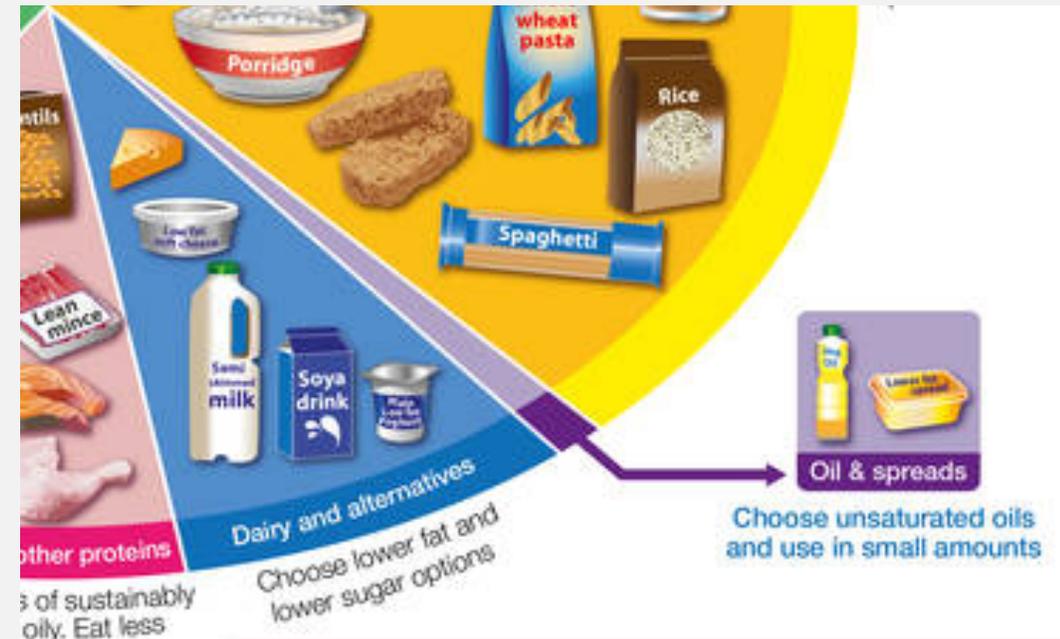
- Nuts and seeds
- Healthy fats and oil
  
- Meat – encourage or limit
  - Are plant and animal protein sources substitutable?
- Dairy

## NUTS, SEEDS

- Nuts are the most-often-ignored food (apart from insects)
- Nuts are sometimes portrayed as positive, sometimes as foods to limit, sometimes confusing
  - 36% group with protein foods
  - 23% place in the fats/oils group

# FATS & OILS

- Are fats and oils a recommended food group, or merely to be limited?
- Fewer than half of all countries (44%) have a message on the quality of fats apart from limiting consumption.
- A minority (18%) of countries include key messages on healthy fats that should be consumed regularly
  - E.g. *“Use olive oil as the main added lipid.”* Greece



U.K.

# MEAT

- Contrasting focus:
- *“Eat a piece of meat, chicken, liver or fish at least twice a week to avoid anaemia and malnutrition.” (Guatemala)*
- *“Eat less red and processed meat, no more than 500 grams a week. Only a small amount of this should be processed meat.” (Sweden)*
- 23% have a key message to limit or moderate consumption of meat of some kind
- Few FBDG (11%) address processed meat, despite UN IARC classification “no quantities are safe”

## MORE

Vegetables, fruit and berries  
fish and shellfish  
nuts and seeds  
exercise



## SWITCH TO

wholegrain  
healthy fats  
low-fat dairy products



## LESS

red and processed meat  
salt  
sugar  
alcohol

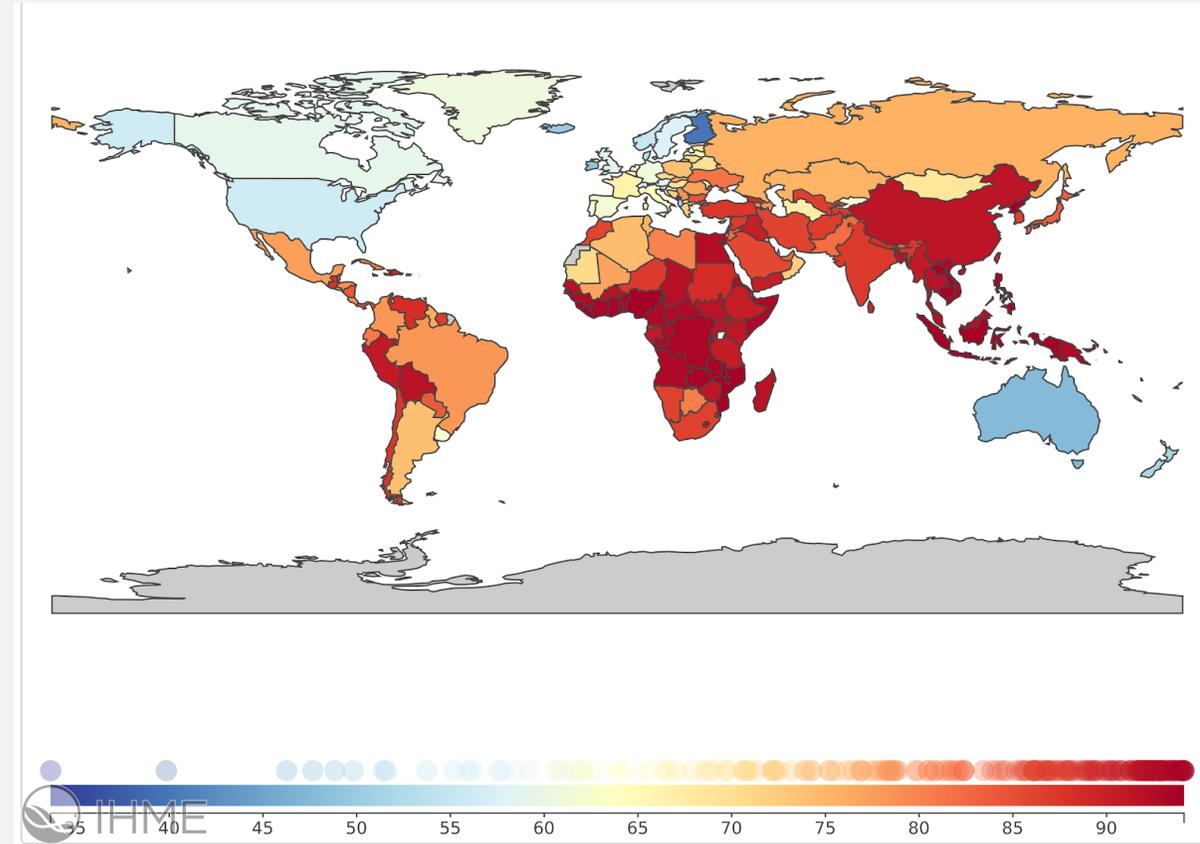


## SUBSTITUTABILITY – ANIMAL/PLANT SOURCES OF PROTEIN

- Half of countries with protein food key messages include both animal and plant sources of protein.
  - *Eat high-protein foods (animal or vegetable source)” – Indonesia*
  - *“When there is no meat, fish or eggs in a given day, you can replace them with pulses, peanuts, soybeans, soya, cheese or peas. All these foods are rich sources of protein.” – Benin*
- Regional variation:
  - Substitution messages more common in Asia Pacific and North America
  - None in Near East or Latin America

# DAIRY

- Dairy is most commonly conveyed as its own food group: 64% of countries
  - That majority is driven by Europe
- A significant minority of countries do not include a separate dairy group (Asia, Africa, LAC)
- Food guides and key messages generally provide alternatives to fluid milk



Source: GBD Compare, 2016 data  
Prevalence consuming <435g/day milk (est)

# CONCLUSIONS

- There is some relatively simple guidance common to most FBDG
  - to consume fruits and vegetables and starchy staples as the bulk of the diet
  - to include legumes and animal source foods in the diet
  - to limit salt, sugar, and fat
  - to consume a diversity of types of food in appropriate proportions.
- Largely, these most common messages align with WHO guidance, with the exception that WHO guidance does not contain statements about animal source foods.

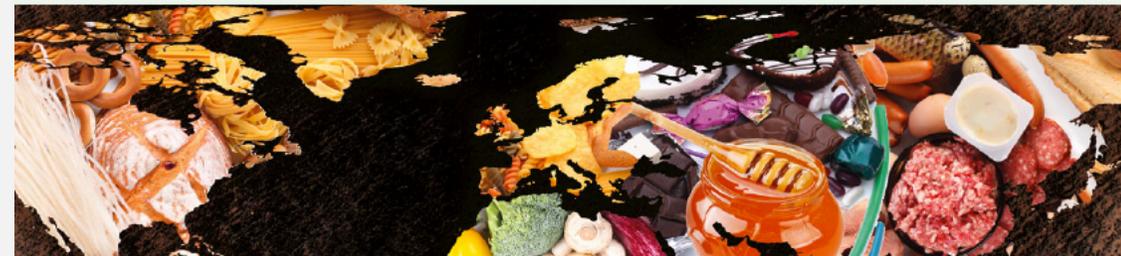
# FUTURE FRONTIERS IN FBDG

- Sustainability
  - Netherlands, Canada, Qatar, Malta, others...
- Rapid dietary transitions toward junk / ultraprocessed food consumption
  - *“Consume less carbonated beverages and artificial juices because they damage your health.” – Paraguay*



## Plates, pyramids, planet

Developments in national healthy and sustainable dietary guidelines: a state of play assessment



## FUTURE FRONTIERS IN FBDG

- A minority of countries convey servings or gram amounts in their key messages or food guides
  - Clear proportions and quantities can be helpful for the purpose of monitoring cost or consumption of recommended diets
- Regional guidelines could be a stepping stone between global and national FBDGs to facilitate the FBDG process, and allow comparisons of the cost or consumption of recommended diets across countries.
  - Nordic Nutrition Recommendations
  - Harmonize across latitudes in Africa?
- More data on dietary intake would be useful to help inform the FBDG process and evaluate how dietary patterns change
- More countries are now developing FBDG for the first time