

EAT-Lancet Report is One-sided, Not Backed by Rigorous Science — The Nutrition Coalition

 nutritioncoalition.us/news/eatlancet-report-one-sided

January 29, 2019

By, Nina Teicholz

The EAT-Lancet Report published last week, with headlines globally, stated that to save both planetary and human health, the world's population needed to cut back dramatically on red meat and other animal products. The prescription is very close to a vegan diet.

News Flash (updated Feb 4th and Feb 7th)

Questions were raised as to whether the EAT-Lancet report underwent external peer review. According to Rosemary Stanton, a well-known nutritionist and [supporter of the report](#) (though not an author), the EAT-Lancet authors (who are dubbed "Commissioners") themselves did their own peer review.. Rosemary Stanton also acknowledged that some of the references are incorrect (see tweet by Kurt Lass, below). Watch this space as we try to resolve the important question about peer review. (This paragraph updated for accuracy and further details on 2/5/19)



Rosemary Stanton
@rosestant70

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Replying to @KurtLass1 @WeDietitians and 7 others

The report was peer reviewed by the Commission. However, you are correct that the references in Panel 2 are not the correct ones. The references to the Cretan diet are from apjcn.nhri.org.tw/server/info/ar...

1:49 AM - 4 Feb 2019

A One-sided Commission and No Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest

The EAT-Lancet commission was portrayed as the product of 37 scientists from around the world. However, in reality, the authors represented a very narrow range of opinions: 31 out of the 37 (>80%) had established published records as being in favor of vegetarian/vegan or anti-meat diets. This include seven from a Stockholm think tank (and EAT co-founder) dedicated to reducing/eliminating meat for environmental reasons. Thus, although readers are given the impression that the EAT authors have been objectively convened to comprehensively evaluate the science, the reality is that this group was one-sided from the start. Instead of grappling with the very real scientific controversies that exist on these topics, the group considered virtually none of the science that contradicts their views.

On diet and health, the lead commissioner was Walter Willett, professor at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health, and his extensive, significant potential conflicts of interest are published in a separate, 8-page document here.

It is also a matter of concern that none of the authors' potential conflicts of interest were disclosed by *The Lancet*, an apparent violation of its standard disclosure policies.

The EAT Diet is Nutritionally Insufficient...

The EAT-Lancet diet is not only nutritionally deficient, it has been likened by some observers to the macrobiotic fad diets popular in the 1970s that resulted in severe protein and nutritional deficiencies.

UK researcher Zoe Harcombe, Ph.D., analyzed the EAT-Lancet diet and found it to provide only 17% of retinol (needed for eye health), 5% of our Vitamin D needs, 22% of sodium, 67% of potassium, 55% of calcium, and 88% of iron. Yet low as these numbers are, they would be worse still if one were to factor in the reality that most of these nutrients are less "bio-available" to humans when consumed from plant rather than animal sources.

The EAT diet is also deficient in Vitamin B12, which can only be obtained from animal foods. EAT's note in the table below states that animal sources of protein can equally well be replaced with "plant proteins" but does not note that doing so would make the diet far more deficient in B12, which is crucial for the healthy growth and cognitive development of children, as well as the ongoing health of adults.

Thus, this diet is fairly sure to lead to malnutrition and ill health. Read Harcombe's blog post on the subject here.

...And Inadequate in Protein

EAT-Lancet recommends .8g protein per kilogram of body weight, but many populations, including children, the overweight/obese, and most people over age 40, need more. Thus, the EAT-Lancet diet overlooks the majority of the world's population.

EAT-Lancet also recognizes that animal foods contain the most complete proteins, ideal for human growth and health yet does not recommend that people consume these superior proteins in significant amounts. Instead, EAT recommends incomplete plant protein sources, such as beans and nuts.

Dietician and Nutritionist Diana Rodgers, points out in a blog post that in addition to being less complete, plant sources of protein come at a high cost, namely much higher calorie counts. She writes,

“To get the same amount [30 grams] of protein in a 4oz steak (181 calories) you’d need to eat 12oz of kidney beans (almost one pound!) plus a cup of rice, which equals 638 calories, and 122g of carbs.

“What about nuts? To get the 30g of protein from almonds, you would need to consume a little over 1 cup of chopped almonds, which is over 850 calories and 75g of fat. YIKES!”

The EAT Diet

	Macronutrient intake (possible range), g/day	Caloric intake, kcal/day
Whole grains*		
Rice, wheat, corn, and other†	232 (total gains 0–60% of energy)	811
Tubers or starchy vegetables		
Potatoes and cassava	50 (0–100)	39
Vegetables		
All vegetables	300 (200–600)	..
Dark green vegetables	100	23
Red and orange vegetables	100	30
Other vegetables	100	25
Fruits		
All fruit	200 (100–300)	126
Dairy foods		
Whole milk or derivative equivalents (eg, cheese)	250 (0–500)	153
Protein sources‡		
Beef and lamb	7 (0–14)	15
Pork	7 (0–14)	15
Chicken and other poultry	29 (0–58)	62
Eggs	13 (0–25)	19
Fish§	28 (0–100)	40
Legumes		
Dry beans, lentils, and peas*	50 (0–100)	172
Soy foods	25 (0–50)	112
Peanuts	25 (0–75)	142
Tree nuts	25	149
Added fats		
Palm oil	6.8 (0–6.8)	60
Unsaturated oils¶	40 (20–80)	354
Dairy fats (included in milk)	0	0
Lard or tallow	5 (0–5)	36
Added sugars		
All sweeteners	31 (0–31)	120

This Report is Not for Children, Teen Girls, the Aged, Malnourished, etc...And For Everyone Else, You Still Need to Buy Supplements

Georgia Ede, MD, in *Psychology Today*, digs into the report and uncovers a number of uncomfortable facts.

Among her findings:

—Although the report says complete proteins causes cancer, it provides no evidence for that statement.

—And:

“The authors admit that it [the report] falls short of providing proper nutrition for growing children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, aging adults, the malnourished, and the impoverished — and that even those not within these special categories will need to take supplements to meet their basic [nutritional] requirements.”

EAT Diet Recommends A Fudge Pop Tart’s Worth of Sugar/Day?

One would think from the report’s language that its recommendations are all about eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, but in fact, EAT advises:

—Only 3% of calories from vegetables. Add the “potatoes/cassava” category, and the total creeps up to 5%

—Only 5% of calories from fruit

This does not appear to be a “more fruits and vegetables” report.

Rather, EAT promotes 8 teaspoons of sugar a day, which is about the equivalent of a **fudge pop tart**.

It also promotes 14% of calories as “unsaturated fats” which are defined as equal amounts of “olive, soybean, rapeseed, sunflower, and peanut oil.” Other than olive oil, these are all **unnatural, industrial products** that only entered the food supply about a century ago. Fourteen percent of calories in vegetable oils is far more than the average American now consumes.

Mostly, EAT recommends **massive amounts of grains (rice, wheat, corn, soy, etc)**. According to EAT, these should comprise fully one third, or **32% of daily calories**. Some **51% of a person’s daily calories should be consumed as carbohydrates**, says EAT, according to Harcombe’s calculations.

Thus, we have a report recommending lots of wheat, rice, corn, soy and more sugar than most national guidelines. This diet is virtually toxic to people with diabetes or pre-diabetes and dangerously high in sugars for people struggling with obesity, heart diseases, fatty liver disease and other nutrition-related conditions.

If not for the public health, then *whom does this diet serve?*

FReSH was jointly launched in January 2017 by the EAT Foundation (EAT) and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), and 25 founding member companies. The total membership has since grown to almost 40 companies.



The Corporate Interests Behind EAT-Lancet

EAT-Lancet was launched simultaneously in 40 cities with a massive PR budget. Who funded all this? All we know is that EAT has an extensive array of corporate partnerships.

Tim Rees of Nutritional Therapy Online [created a table of all the EAT-Lancet corporate funders](#). These include;

- Seven Big Pharma companies, with drugs for many nutrition-related diseases
- About 20 Big Food companies, including Kellogg's, Nestle, and PepsiCo.

Note that the companies selling highly processed foods, like Nestle and Kellogg's are essentially vegan. The vast majority of packaged foods sold on the inner aisles of supermarkets—cookies, crackers, chips (crisps), candy, cereals—are made up of the same basic ingredients: soy, corn, grains, sugars, and salt. This is vegan. These companies would presumably like nothing more than to put a big green V on their packages to give them a reason to advertise their foods as healthy.

Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical companies profit from selling drugs, insulin, and devices that sick people need. Would these companies be backing EAT if this diet were to genuinely improve health, reduce disease, and thus, shrink their profits? It's hard to imagine.

Moreover, also supporting the EAT-Lancet report are:

- 14 chemical companies, including BASF, the "world's largest chemical company."

What is the interest of these companies in supporting a report targeting animal agriculture as the main driver of global warming if not—perhaps—to displace attention away from their own polluting activities? Or perhaps they make the pesticides that grow crops.

One cannot know the answer to all these questions, but the massive level of corporate backing clearly raises serious questions about the interests behind this report, especially when

there is no rigorous evidence to support the idea that this diet promotes human health and quite a bit of evidence to show that it causes harm.

The Globe-Trotting Billionaires Behind the Report

The founder and executive chair of EAT, [vegan Norwegian billionaire Gunhild Stordalen](#), says she has a passion for preventing climate change. Shortly after publication of EAT-Lancet, however, she was revealed to be the owner of a \$26 million private jet which she and her husband regularly fly to exotic locations around the world—thus emitting vast amounts of their own greenhouse gasses (GHG) and causing some observers to wonder if Stordalen was unwittingly enacting a modern-day version of “let them eat cake.”

The Mirror UK published, [“Globe-trotting billionaire behind campaign to save planet accused of blatant hypocrisy.”](#)

On Twitter, one observer did some calculations:

 **Mike Carrato**
@MikeCarrato

Replying to @MikeCarrato @NoonesFirstNan @drjasonfung

Let's see. I googled and found that a cross country round trip private flight releases ~42 tons C. Another google estimates a cow emits ~6 tons, so they consume 7 cows per trip, about 3500 oz beef. At 1/2 oz per day, EACH trip is the YEARLY beef quota for 20 people.
#hypocrisy

9:24 PM - 17 Jan 2019

Glamorous billionaire who funded study telling people they must only eat a quarter of a rasher of bacon a day to save the planet is slammed as hypocrite for jetting around the world in her £20m private PLANE



Thanks to [Belinda Fettke](#) and [her article](#) for this find.

One could ask, further, about the GHG emitted by the whole EAT-Lancet project. Thirty-seven authors from 16 countries were gathered together for at least two scientific meetings, followed in 2019 by at least 5 “[launch](#)” meetings by the Commission, as well as a further massive roll-out last week in 35 sites worldwide.

[A second EAT-Lancet paper](#), released January 27th, involved 43 authors from countries around the globe, who were gathered for 9 “workshops” and 3 meetings in various locations worldwide. How much GHG was required to enable all this travel?

Although many researchers claim that planes, trains, and automobiles do not produce as much greenhouse gases as do cows, there are contrary views on this topic. For instance, as the [Food and Agriculture Organization recently pointed out](#), the GHG of livestock have been calculated to include both direct and indirect costs, whereas the transport sector has been analyzed looking only at direct costs. I’m not an expert in the environmental issues here, but this does seem like a worrisome oversight.

One Other Significant Funder of EAT-Lancet: The Wellcome Trust

Among the complex network of funders behind EAT, the Wellcome Trust is a principal one, for the report’s scientific component (as opposed to the worldwide PR). The trust, with \$29.2 billion in assets, is funded by the Wellcome family and its pharmaceutical fortune. This family also has [a three-generation history in the 7th Day Adventist Church](#) including a member—the father of the trust’s founder—who was a church elder. The 7th Day Adventist Church promotes vegetarianism as *part of its religious beliefs* and has pursued an [aggressive mission to spread these beliefs and practices around the world](#). This raises the disturbing question of whether a religious agenda might be informing the EAT-Lancet report.

EAT-Lancet Aggressive in its Policy Recommendations: Wants Near-Vegan Diet for All

EAT-Lancet states that “the scale of change to the food system is unlikely to be successful if left to the individual or the *whim* of consumer choice.” [Emphasis added.] Thus, the report advocates:

“hard policy interventions include laws, fiscal measures, subsidies and penalties, trade reconfiguration, and other economic and structural measures....[C]ountries and authorities should not restrict themselves to narrow measures or soft interventions. Too often policy remains at the soft end of the policy ladder.”

Because meat taxes seems to be the intervention of choice, stay tuned for those...and other measures intervening in our daily choices about what to eat.

There’s a Better, Evidence-based Way Forward

In all, EAT-Lancet has every indication of being the product of international industrialist interests, from processed food companies, whose products provoke nutrition-related diseases, to pharmaceutical companies, whose profits are fueled by those diseases, to the world’s chemical companies, whose interests in environmental well-being are elusive. The common cause of these industries appears now to be scapegoating meat for all environmental and health ills. And they have found willing advocates in the committed, idealistic vegans and environmentalists who deeply believe in these solutions.

We should return to the fundamentals of good science. Establishing policy based on weak science leads to unintended consequences as we’ve seen time and again—with the mistaken policies recommending hormone replacement therapy, caps on cholesterol, and more. Such policies actually ended up causing far more harm than good, as the EAT diet seems bound to do.

What does the rigorous science say about the best way to reverse the epidemics of obesity and diabetes (and more) now crippling our nations? The rigorous evidence does not support a near-vegan diet. The answer must include animal foods, since they naturally contain the nutrients needed for healthy human growth and development.

Our way forward should be to gather a group of experts who could objectively identify the *rigorous* clinical trial data on healthy diets, and then work together to make *those* diets sustainable.

Footnotes:

[1] 0%, analysis specifically of nutritional epidemiology:

<https://rss.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1740-9713.2011.00506.x>

[2] 20%: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16014596>