Nutrition Society Congress 2024, 2–5 July 2024

A survey to understand whether an evolution of the Eatwell Guide and use of icons would support protein diversification, particularly more plant-based and fungi-based (non-animal) proteins

L.R. Durrant[1], S Slade[2], T Haffner[2] and H.E. Theobald[1]
[1]*Marlow Foods Ltd, Stokesley, UK*
[2]*MyNutriWeb, London, UK*

Dietary guidelines, such as the Eatwell Guide, play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and behaviours regarding nutrition. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in diversifying protein sources, particularly towards more sustainable options such as plant-based and fungibased proteins.[1,2] However, the effectiveness of current dietary guidance in promoting these alternatives remains uncertain.[3] This study aims to seek views from healthcare and food professionals on whether an evolution of the Eatwell Guide to represent more protein-rich foods, and incorporate icons to denote origin of protein sources, could raise awareness of and support protein diversification.

Between 8th and 31st March 2024, an incentivised survey was distributed to members of the MyNutriWeb community, consisting primarily of healthcare and food professionals. The survey aimed to gauge respondents' perceptions of whether an evolution of the visual representation of the Eatwell Guide, to represent more protein sources pictorially or within the description, and the use of icons within the plate image, would support them when talking through the protein section and support protein diversification, particularly in the form of plant-based and fungi-based proteins.

Of the 865 respondents, the majority (65%) were dietitians and nutritionists, with 12% being students and the remaining respondents representing various other food and health professions. While 83% (of 719 respondents) reported finding plant-based and fungi-based foods and drinks easy to identify within the Eatwell Guide plate image and description, only 12% were confident that those they support can easily identify them. However, a significant proportion (92% of 712 respondents) believed that updating the proteins description and images within the Eatwell Guide to showcase a more diverse range of proteins, will support people to consider more plant-based and fungi-based proteins within their diet. Furthermore, 68% (of 688 respondents) think adding plant-based and fungi-based icons to help themselves and other people to more easily identify plant-based and fungi-based foods and drinks would be 'helpful' or 'very helpful'.

These findings underscore the potential for visual and descriptive enhancements of the Eatwell Guide, such as the inclusion of a more diverse range of protein foods and the use of icons, to improve the effectiveness of dietary guidelines in promoting protein diversification. By better representing plant-based and fungi-based options, the Eatwell Guide could facilitate informed decision-making and encourage the adoption of more sustainable dietary practices. Moreover, the high level of support expressed by respondents, including nutrition professionals, highlights the relevance and importance of incorporating visual aids to support the in-practice promotion of healthier and more sustainable dietary habits.

References

1. British Dietetic Association (2019) One Blue Dot. Eating patterns for health and environmentalsustainability. Available at: https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/one-blue-dot.html.
2. Willett MD, Rockstrom J, Loken B *et al.* (2019) Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems *The Lancet Commissions* **393**(10170): 447–492. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31788-4.
3. Scheelbeek P, Green R, Papier K *et al.* Health impacts and environmental footprints of diets that meet the Eatwell Guide recommendations: analyses of multiple UK studies *BMJ Open* 2020;**10**, e037554. doi: 10.1136/ bmjopen-2020-03755.