



Australian Government

National Health and
Medical Research Council

AUSTRALIAN DIETARY GUIDELINES

Public Consultation Report

Appendix G: Food, Nutrition and Environmental Sustainability

2013

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Public Consultation Period

The draft Appendix was released for public consultation, as required by the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act* (1992) from 3 October 2012 until 2 November 2012. Submissions were received from non-government organisations, health services, individuals and health departments, with a total of 72 submissions registered.

Public Consultation Submissions

Office of NHMRC (ONHMRC) thanks all who provided a submission. Submissions classified as ‘*not confidential*’ are provided at http://consultations.nhmrc.gov.au/public_consultations/submissions/all.

Process of Consideration

The ONHMRC gave due regard to all submissions and carefully reviewed each submission received. ONHMRC also met with key Commonwealth agencies with responsibilities in this area to discuss their submissions in more detail.

The post public consultation draft of the Appendix underwent further targeted consultation with government agencies, the Public Health Association of Australia and two representatives from the industry and primary production sectors.

Summary of Changes to Consultation Draft

This summary provides an overview of substantive changes to specific topic areas in response to the submissions. Editorial comments from submissions are not included.

Specific Topic	ONHMRC Response
Overall comments	<p>Submissions requested additional material, including calls for a guideline to be developed. At this time, there are limitations to the size and quality of the body of evidence, which therefore cannot be used to form a guideline. Similarly, because of the evolving science and evidence base, it is difficult to be definitive about impacts, particularly given the many relevant and sometimes conflicting considerations (eg water use, emissions, soil degradation, transport requirements).</p> <p>Comments suggested greater use of the term ‘sustainability’ in the appendix. The three pillars of sustainability (environment, economic and social) have been included, as well as a greater reference to environmental sustainability where appropriate.</p>

<p>Section G1: Background</p>	<p>Submissions provided helpful information relevant to this section. The following improvements have been made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of greater detail on the complexities and drivers of the food system, including acknowledgement of the social and economic aspects of sustainability - Greater linkages between environment and health - More focus on over-consumption and food waste - Inclusion of a defined scope/purpose and target audience for this content.
<p>Figure G1: Environmental Impacts within the Food System</p>	<p>This Figure was well received in submissions, and identified as useful. The following improvements have been made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Food System is now represented in a cyclic rather than linear manner - ‘Drivers’ of the Food System have been included as part of this figure - The Food System now includes agriculture and aquaculture - ‘Inputs’ and ‘outputs/impacts’ are clearly labelled.
<p>Section G2: The nature and challenges of the evidence base</p>	<p>Submissions identified this section as unclear and suggested improvements to improve its utility. The following changes have been made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion of an upfront, clear summary on the state of the current evidence base - Acknowledgement of the multifactorial nature of environmental sustainability and the challenges of the evidence base, different methodologies and measures of sustainability - Information on why sustainable practices around food consumption are important – including acknowledgment for progressive work at government and non-government levels.
<p>G3: The Guidelines through an environmental lens</p>	<p>This section was criticised in many submissions for lacking supporting evidence. Transferring the focus to relevant information around overconsumption and food waste was considered to be more appropriate for health professionals and supported by significant evidence. It was also noted that this text should integrate advice on sustainable food practices with health/nutrition outcomes to improve practicality.</p> <p>Several submissions commented that the Appendix does not provide adequate information on the production and consumption of specific foods, such as animal products, as a significant measure for reducing environmental impact. Similarly, some submissions emphasised the importance of choosing organic and/or local foods.</p>

	<p>However, the current evidence base is not strong enough to support information regarding specific foods or production systems. Until such evidence is available, the document has been redrafted to provide advice of a general nature on dietary strategies to maximise health outcomes and minimise environmental impact.</p>
G4: Practical Tips	<p>Submissions generally considered this section to be the most useful but identified a need to make it more comprehensive. The following changes have been made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More discussion of practices associated with overconsumption and food waste - Ensuring all tips/practical considerations are supported by evidence - Ensuring the information is practical and relevant to a health professional providing advice and answering queries from clients.
G5: Key References	<p>Submissions criticised this section, with calls for it to be removed as it is not considered to be useful, as well as calls for a literature review to be released on this topic. The revised Appendix now includes in-text referencing, where appropriate.</p>
Inclusion of this information in other resources	<p>Submissions suggested that this information should be included in companion resources. Where possible, this has been considered in the development of the companion resources.</p>