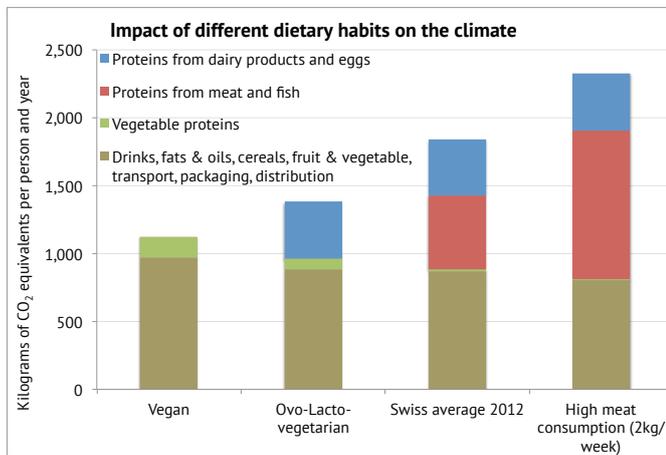


Guideline: Sustainable Catering

Background

In industrialised countries, food production is responsible for a considerable proportion of national greenhouse gas emissions – ranging from 15 to 28 per cent [1]. Different dietary habits affect the environment to varying degrees. The production of meat and dairy products alone is responsible for approximately 14.5 per cent of global greenhouse gases [2]. The graph below displays the different pollution levels based on CO₂ equivalents for a vegan diet, an ovo-lacto vegetarian diet (including eggs and milk, but not meat), an average diet, and a diet with a high meat consumption in Switzerland.



Impact of different dietary habits on the climate per person and year in CO₂ equivalents, own graph, based on [3].

Also for refreshments, a careful choice of products can reduce environmental pollution. The most important criteria are described in this guideline. Those marked with an * are also relevant for small, internal meetings, where primarily coffee and biscuits are consumed; the remaining criteria are only relevant for larger events.

In a nutshell: Tips on sustainable catering

The more vegan, vegetarian, seasonal, regional, bio-certified and fair trade products are used, the more sustainable the catering is. Meat and fish products ought to be avoided or reduced and offered from species-appropriate and sustainable farming. Waste can be curbed by reducing the amount of packaging, using reusable tableware and offering tap water instead of mineral water.

Criteria for sustainable catering

We propose the following criteria to help choose sustainable catering services. The more criteria fulfilled, the more sustainable the refreshments.

- **Vegan:** Vegan food excludes all animal-based ingredients (e.g. meat, fish, cheese, milk, eggs). Avoiding animal farming and feed production reduces the water resources used and the greenhouse gas emissions considerably [2].
- **Vegetarian:** This leads to a reduction in environmental pollution as animal farming for meat production causes many greenhouse gas emissions [4]. Moreover, this combats overfishing, helps – dependent on the fish species and the form of fishing – avoiding damage to the seabed [5], and prevents the destruction of natural habitats by fish farms [6].
- **Seasonal:** This particularly applies to fruit and vegetables and compared to non-seasonal products leads to a reduction in environmental pollution as it does not require highly energy-intensive cultivation in greenhouses or deep-freezing [7].
- **Regional*:** This leads to a decrease in emissions caused by transportation for comparable non-regional products [8].
- **Bio-certification*:** Organic farming avoids the use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers [7].
- **Fair-trade certification*:** The fair-trade certification guarantees fair working conditions, stable wages and minimum prices for many products [10].
- **Tap water instead of mineral water*:** This leads to a major reduction in environmental pollution. The CO₂ emissions associated with one litre of mineral water in a glass or PET bottle throughout the entire product lifecycle are around 200 to 400 times higher than that of one litre of tap water [9].
- **Reusable tableware*:** This results in a reduction of environmental pollution as the CO₂ emissions are usually much lower throughout the entire product lifecycle for reusable products than disposable ones [11]. If reusable tableware is not an option, paper is preferable over plastic tableware.
- **Waste:** Reducing the amount of packaging curbs environmental pollution.
- **Labelling:** Labelling the products and ingredients is extremely important for people with allergies. However, this should not generate additional packaging waste.
- **Social commitment of suppliers:** This includes amongst others the integration of people in the job market for whom it is otherwise harder to find employment.

If the refreshments provided are not completely vegan or vegetarian, the following criteria are also important:

- **Species-appropriate farming:** This boosts animal welfare. Eggs should come from free-range hens.
- **Avoiding endangered fish species; fish from sustainable farming:** This combats overfishing. Almost 30 per cent of the fish stocks in the world's seas are currently overfished and a further 60 per cent are on the brink of overfishing [13]. Freshwater fish ought to come from sustainable fishing or farming, and saltwater fish should be marked green in the WWF or Greenpeace guide [12].

For a comparison of the different catering suppliers according to the criteria of this guideline, we have elaborated a [questionnaire](#) to be filled in by the caterers. At the University of Zurich, employees can ask the Sustainability Team via info@sustainability.uzh.ch for an overview of already filled in questionnaires. If you already have a longstanding cooperation with a company and are reluctant to change, ask the company whether they would be willing to work towards fulfilling the aforementioned criteria.

Food waste: Avoiding leftover food and drink

Besides heeding procurement criteria, avoiding food waste is very important. Realistically estimating the number of people and their eating habits can minimise leftovers. As opened food packages and drink bottles do not keep as long as closed ones, new packages and bottles should only be opened if they are expected to be consumed.

Further information	
Labels	The analysis conducted by Pusch , WWF Schweiz , Consumer Protection Foundation and Helvetas offers a good overview of the ambition of sustainability labels. The Umweltnetz Schweiz provides analyses on food labels, including analyses on species-appropriate farming.
Seasonality	The WWF Season Calender provides useful information.
Guides on endangered fish species	The fish guides by Greenpeace and WWF reveal which species of fish and seafood are endangered.
Instruments to calculate the environmental impact	Several organisations and companies, such as WWF and eaternity , offer instruments to calculate the environmental impact of your own diet.

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