



The EAT-Lancet Commission on healthy, sustainable, and just food systems

REPORT

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In October 2025, the [EAT-Lancet Commission](#) on healthy, sustainable, and equitable food systems released a new evidence-based report addressing nutrition and human health within safe and just planetary boundaries. This informative note aims to summarise the report's key findings and outline policy recommendations to address the identified gaps.

Introduction of the Issue

The 2025 EAT–*Lancet* Commission emphasises the urgent need for a “great food transformation” to tackle the linked crises of human health, environmental damage, and social injustice. Since the first Commission in 2019, global issues such as geopolitical instability, the COVID-19 pandemic, and rising food costs have exposed and worsened systemic vulnerabilities. Although food systems produce enough calories for the world’s population, they remain the primary cause of planetary boundary breaches, especially in land use, freshwater depletion, nitrogen and phosphorus pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions.

At the same time, unequal access to healthy diets continues, with more than half of the world’s population unable to afford or access nutritionally adequate food. Malnutrition, obesity, and diet-related chronic illnesses have worsened alongside social inequalities and labor injustices. Food systems thus sit at the intersection of planetary and social crises, affecting climate stability, biodiversity, public health, and human rights. The EAT–*Lancet* Commission calls for urgent, coordinated transformation to ensure that food systems deliver healthy diets for everyone while staying within the planet’s ecological limits and promoting fairness across societies.

Analysis of the Report

Building on its 2019 predecessor, this updated EAT–*Lancet* Commission significantly broadens its scope by integrating health, environmental, and justice aspects into a unified framework for evaluating the global food system. While the first Commission introduced the concept of the Planetary Health Diet (PHD) and measured food’s contribution to planetary boundaries, the 2025 report expands this framework to include social foundations and human rights, presenting a comprehensive view of a “safe and just space” for humanity. It acknowledges that food systems are the primary drivers influencing global health, ecological stability, and equity, placing them at the intersection of the climate, biodiversity, nutrition, and justice crises.

The report’s analysis is organised around four key pillars: dietary health, environmental sustainability, social justice, and systems modelling. In the dietary health section, the Commission reaffirms the importance of the Planetary Health Diet (PHD) as a scientifically supported model for human wellbeing. The PHD encourages a mostly plant-based diet rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, and nuts, with limited consumption of animal-sourced foods, sugars, and saturated fats. Based on updated meta-analyses and long-term studies involving over 200,000 participants, the Commission estimates that global adherence to the PHD could prevent approximately 15 million premature deaths each year, representing 27% of all adult deaths worldwide. Half of this reduction would come from improved diet quality, especially increased intake of plant-based foods. In contrast, the other half would result from a decrease in the prevalence of overweight, obesity, and undernutrition. The report also includes evidence on additional health issues such as dementia and atrial fibrillation. It examines the indirect impacts of food systems on health, including antimicrobial resistance, air pollution, and pandemic risks related to livestock production.

The environmental sustainability analysis highlights one of the report’s most significant scientific advances. For the first time, the Commission quantifies the food system’s contribution to all nine planetary boundaries, revealing that food production is the main driver of five of the six boundaries currently exceeded: land system change, biosphere integrity loss, freshwater use, and the nitrogen and phosphorus biogeochemical cycles. Food systems account for about 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and even with complete decarbonisation of the energy sector, they alone would cause global warming to surpass the 1.5°C limit set by the Paris Agreement. Unsustainable agricultural expansion, primarily deforestation, continues to harm biodiversity and disrupt climate regulation, while excessive fertiliser use leads to nutrient pollution and ocean acidification. The report also emphasises the underexplored but serious impact of novel entities, such as plastics, pesticides, and other synthetic chemicals, on ecological and human health, calling for urgent research and regulation. At the same time, the Commission advocates for sustainable and ecological intensification as a key solution: integrating ecological processes (e.g., carbon sequestration, pollination, nutrient cycling) into agricultural landscapes could help countries develop a net-zero food system, reduce land and water footprints, and lower greenhouse gas emissions without sacrificing productivity.

The justice and equity aspect is a major innovation in this report, expanding beyond environmental and nutritional factors to include the social foundations of food systems. The Commission describes justice through three perspectives: distributive, recognitional, and representational, covering fairness in outcomes, acknowledgment of diverse identities, and inclusion in decision-making. It identifies nine social foundations needed to uphold the human rights to food, a healthy environment, and decent work, with six of these assessed quantitatively. The results are striking: nearly half of the global population lives below these social thresholds, while the wealthiest 30% account for over 70% of the environmental impacts from food systems. Only 1% of humanity currently lives within a safe and just space. These figures reveal significant inequalities in the benefits and burdens of food production and consumption, showing that dietary excesses in wealthy countries threaten planetary stability, while deprivation persists elsewhere. Therefore, the report redefines healthy diets not just as personal choices but as shared responsibilities with collective implications for justice and sustainability.

Finally, the multi-model scenario analysis, using eleven global agro-economic and environmental models, estimates the possible outcomes of different transformation pathways. Simulations show that combining three strategies, adopting the PHD, improving agricultural productivity, and reducing food loss and waste, could collectively cut agricultural greenhouse gas emissions by 20%, compared to only 15% if the dietary change occurred alone. Similarly, these combined efforts could limit increases in nitrogen and phosphorus use to 15% by 2050, versus a projected 41% increase under current trends. However, even with these ambitious plans, the world would only stay within safe limits for climate and freshwater systems, and the biogeochemical boundaries for nitrogen and phosphorus would still face significant stress. The Commission's modelling highlights that no single action is enough; instead, a systemic transformation that includes technological innovation, behavioural change, fair resource sharing, and governance reform is essential. This analysis confirms that the shift toward healthy, sustainable, and equitable food systems is physically possible but politically and socially challenging, requiring coordinated efforts across different levels and sectors.

Policy Recommendations

The EAT–Lancet Commission proposes an integrated set of evidence-based policy actions to achieve healthy, sustainable, and just food systems by 2050. Central to these recommendations is the creation of enabling food environments that make nutritious and sustainable diets available, affordable, and appealing to all populations. The Commission stresses that the Planetary Health Diet (PHD), a predominantly plant-based dietary pattern with moderate amounts of animal-sourced foods, minimal added sugars, saturated fats, and salt, should serve as the global reference framework for these policies. Adopting the PHD could prevent approximately 15 million deaths per year (27% of total global mortality) and significantly reduce diet-related non-communicable diseases.

Governments are urged to implement comprehensive strategies that combine demand-side and supply-side interventions, including the protection and promotion of traditional, culturally appropriate diets; the adoption of sustainable and ecological intensification practices in agriculture; and the enforcement of strict regulations to prevent further

conversion of natural ecosystems. This includes achieving zero deforestation of remaining intact biomes and improving nutrient management to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus boundary transgressions, which currently account for the near totality of food system pollution. In parallel, systemic efforts are required to reduce food loss and waste by improving infrastructure, increasing consumer awareness, and promoting circular resource use. Model projections indicate that the combined implementation of healthy diets, improved productivity, and reduced food loss and waste could cut agricultural emissions by 20% and limit increases in nitrogen and phosphorus use to only 15% above 2020 levels, compared with a 41% rise under business-as-usual scenarios.

The Commission also highlights the moral and practical necessity of securing decent working conditions, ensuring fair representation of all actors in food governance, and protecting marginalised groups from structural inequalities. Nearly half the global population currently lives below the social foundations for human rights related to food, health, and decent work. At the same time, the wealthiest 30% of people generate over 70% of food-related environmental pressures. Addressing this imbalance is central to ensuring justice and unlocking progress. To support implementation, the report advocates organising these measures into coherent “policy bundles” tailored to regional contexts and aligned with international frameworks such as the Paris Agreement, the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Commission estimates that transforming food systems will require annual investments of US\$200–500 billion, yielding economic benefits of approximately US\$5 trillion per year by improving health outcomes, reducing environmental damage, and increasing resilience.

Conclusions

The EAT–*Lancet* Commission concludes that transforming the world’s food systems is both a moral duty and a scientific necessity to protect planetary and human health. Food systems are currently the most significant cause of environmental damage, biodiversity loss, and climate change, while also perpetuating malnutrition, inequality, and human rights abuses. Without strong and coordinated action, these linked crises will continue to harm global health, social fairness, and ecological stability. However, the evidence shows that shifting to the Planetary Health Diet, along with sustainable production and fair governance, is both feasible and economically viable. Justice is seen as both the foundation and the driver of this change, making sure that everyone’s rights to food, a healthy environment, and fair work are upheld. The report urges unprecedented global teamwork among governments, civil society, research organisations, and businesses to create tailored action plans, set science-based goals, and improve accountability. Only through such inclusive and coordinated efforts can humanity realise the vision of healthy people thriving within a healthy, fair, and stable planet.



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