

A PERFECT PAIR

Plant and Animal Foods in Sustainable Healthy Diets

Comerford KB, Miller GD, Reinhardt Kapsak W, Brown KA. The Complementary Roles for Plant-Source and Animal-Source Foods in Sustainable Healthy Diets. *Nutrients*. 2021; 13(10):3469.



Despite originating from two separate biological kingdoms, animal- and plant-source foods **offer an overlapping supply of essential nutrients that can support our health and contribute to more secure and resilient food systems.**¹

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

Evolving dietary guidance

Over the last 30 years, dietary guidelines around the world have shifted from a nutrient-based approach to a food-based approach.² While each country's guidance is unique, most recommend a variety of nutrient-rich foods from both plant and animal sources; particularly fruits, vegetables and dairy foods.^{1,2} More recently, many countries have recognized the need to shift to more sustainable food systems and have implemented sustainability principles into their dietary guidance.^{1,2}

Synergy between plant and animal foods

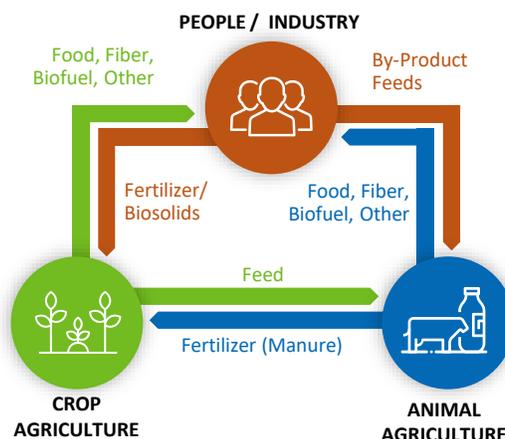
Plant and animal agriculture play a complementary role in supporting healthy diets and sustainable food systems. When combined, both sources of food provide an overlapping array of micronutrients, fiber and bioactive compounds that benefit human health. Furthermore, both dietary diversity and redundancy support the sustainability of ecological systems.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1 Beyond nutrients: bioactive compounds and the food matrix

- Plant foods offer phytosterols and polyphenols that can have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.
- Certain dairy foods can offer immunoglobulins (antibodies), probiotics, and unique fatty acids that can have anti-inflammatory and immune-supporting effects.
- The food matrix, or structural web of food compounds, influences how we digest and absorb nutrients. Combining different food groups, like plant and animal foods, can help optimize these benefits.

2 Symbiotic agriculture: supporting sustainable food systems



3 Beyond nutrition: a varied diet supports multiple sustainability domains³⁻⁵

-  **Human health:** promoting the wellbeing of communities and societies
-  **Environment:** preserving our natural resources
-  **Social:** protecting cultural traditions and food justice
-  **Economic:** supporting jobs, local markets, and innovation

Plant and Animal foods Complement Each Other



Animal sourced foods tend to be **higher in protein, branch chain amino acids, iodine, iron, zinc, vitamin B12 and choline.**



Dairy foods can enhance plant-packed plates by **adding nutrients, as well as satisfying flavor and texture.**



Plant sourced foods tend to be **higher in carbohydrates, fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C and other antioxidants.**



No single food group can contribute adequate amounts or ideal ratios of the nutrients essential to human health, so pair plants with dairy foods for a superfood power couple.



Together, plant and animal-sourced foods contain the macronutrients (protein, carbohydrates and fats) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) we need. **They're the true power couple.**



Kefir Overnight Oats with nuts and berries

Reset yourself and show your gut some love when you start your day with this satisfying kefir dish



Optional:
Berries of choice, cinnamon, seeds or nuts

Complementary nutrients:
Kefir: protein, calcium, probiotics
Oats: fiber, B vitamins, prebiotics



Grilled Halloumi Cheese Skewers with Veggies

A natural source of protein, these flavorful skewers will energize your day



Optional:
Roasted tomatoes, peppers, onions, zucchini

Complementary nutrients:
Halloumi: calcium, protein
Veggies: vitamin C, antioxidants



Labneh and Whole Grain Pita with cucumbers, tomatoes and radishes

A tangy and creamy Middle Eastern appetizer



Optional:
Olive oil, olives, spices, cucumbers

Complementary nutrients:
Labneh: protein, calcium, probiotics
Whole grain pita: fiber, B vitamins



Latte made with Milk

A classic foamy drink to unwind or revive



Optional:
Cinnamon, cocoa powder, ice

Complementary nutrients:
Milk: B12, iodine, calcium, protein, vitamin D
Coffee: antioxidants

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