

Viewpoint: Ready to abandon milk and meat to improve health and save the environment? Not so fast.

Substituting meat and dairy with more plant-based foods in our diets can achieve benefits for human and environmental health: [this is a well-known fact](#). What's perhaps less known is that these benefits can vary widely, depending on precisely which animal-based foods are displaced, a new study finds.

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Disentangling the two was the goal of the new [Nature Food study](#), from a team of UK-Canadian researchers. Their inspiration came from the recently updated Canadian national food guide, which suggests that Canadians should up their daily intake of plant proteins.

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The relatively small size of these environmental gains for dairy substitutes were put into perspective when they were weighed up against some of the nutritional losses driven by a shift to plants, which the researchers delved into as well. In both meat- and dairy substitute diets there were some small, relatively insignificant declines in protein and vitamin D levels. But the most striking figure was that a 50% dairy replacement would lead to a 14% increase in the number of people experiencing a calcium deficit in Canada—an ingredient that is critical for the growth of healthy muscles and bones.

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"Improving our health and reducing our carbon footprint does not necessarily require drastic changes, such as completely shifting our dietary patterns or excluding certain foods altogether, but making simple, conscious changes to our diets that should be well within reach for most Canadians," says Auclair.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)