



Media Release

For immediate release

Attention: health, medical, lifestyle editor

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Health organisations say Ministry of Health is right to urge reduced meat and dairy in hospitals

The New Zealand Climate & Health Council and health promotion charity Doctors for Nutrition strongly support the new *Sustainability and the Health Sector* guidance announced last week as it will result in a much healthier population.

“People and the planet will both be healthier if we shift towards a plant-based diet, and cut back on meat and dairy, as recommended,” according to Dr Alex Macmillan, Co-convenor of OraTaiao: The NZ Climate and Health Council.

“The recommendations will help prevent some of New Zealand’s biggest killers including obesity, heart disease, diabetes and bowel cancer. Taking a prevention approach by addressing diets means huge savings for the health sector which can then be used for better treatment, including for cancer patients.”

The [American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#) agrees that people who eat a plant-based diet are at reduced risk of many diseases.

All of the international research supports the new guidelines, including the recent [EAT-Lancet Commission](#), which calls for an urgent ‘Great Food Transformation’. Doctors For Nutrition Lead Nutrition Advisor for NZ and Canadian Registered Dietitian, Anna DeMello, is working at the University of Otago and researching sustainable, healthy diets.

“Alongside health benefits, we see a stepwise reduction in diet-related climate pollution as our diet becomes increasingly plant-based. Public institutions can play a leading role in addressing the climate emergency, including implementing sustainable food policies and procurement practices”, Anna explains.

According to the World Health Organisation, processed meats are group one [carcinogens](#) (meaning they cause cancer) and are unsuitable to be served by health organisations to patients or staff.

Alcoholic beverages and tobacco smoking are also group one carcinogens, which is why these are also not appropriate to consume in health organisations.

Australian doctor Renae Thomas, who is currently working at one of the most progressive hospitals in the world, Loma Linda University Medical Center in California, believes the new guidelines will lead to a healthier population.

Dr Thomas has challenged Dietitians NZ, who are worried about cutting back on meat and dairy in hospitals, and who receive funding and sponsorship from both the meat and dairy industries.

“Plant-based meals are appropriate for people at all stages of life, including while in hospital. The Loma Linda University Hospital is completely vegetarian with a menu endorsed by dietitians and has the best hospital rating in the region. Their menu provides an adequate amount of protein, iron, B vitamins, and fibre with less cholesterol and saturated fat. The diet thus reduces risk of heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, colon cancer, and obesity.”

“The need for high calories and protein in hospital can easily be addressed with plant-based options including protein drinks like smoothies and other fortified plant-based milks, legumes and beans, grain-based meals, nuts and seeds,” said Dr Thomas.

“Providing vegetarian and plant-based nutrition in a hospital provides an opportunity to educate patients on optimal nutrition when well planned and under the guidance of hospital registered dietitians.”

Leading medical journal, The Lancet, highlights food as the single strongest lever to optimise human health and environmental sustainability on Earth. “The nature and scale of the response to climate change will be the determining factor in shaping the health of nations for centuries to come.”

OraTaiao and Doctors For Nutrition strongly endorse the ‘Sustainability and the Health Sector’ report and consider that once recommendations are implemented, New Zealand could become innovative world leaders in promoting healthy, sustainable diets.

Ends.

About OraTaiao

OraTaiao has over 500 health professional members calling for urgent, fair climate action - with real health gains now and for our future. Their call to action on

climate change has been signed by 14 of the country's leading health professional bodies, representing over 60,000 health professionals.

About Doctors For Nutrition

Doctors For Nutrition is a health promotion charity led by medical and dietetic professionals dedicated to putting evidence-based nutrition at the heart of healthcare.

doctorsfornutrition.org | nutritioninhealthcare.org

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