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Food-based dietary guidelines as a policy for healthy sustainable food system transformation



**CHANCE**  
CLIMATE & HEALTH AFRICA NETWORK  
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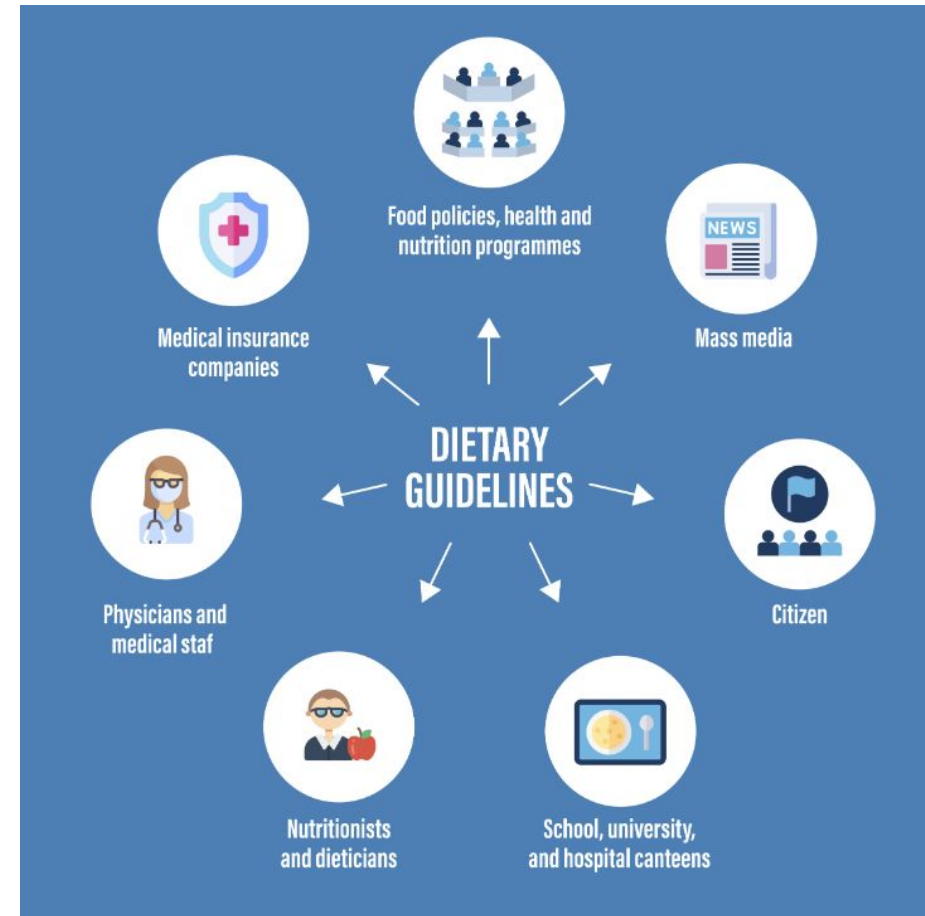
# Physicians Association for Nutrition



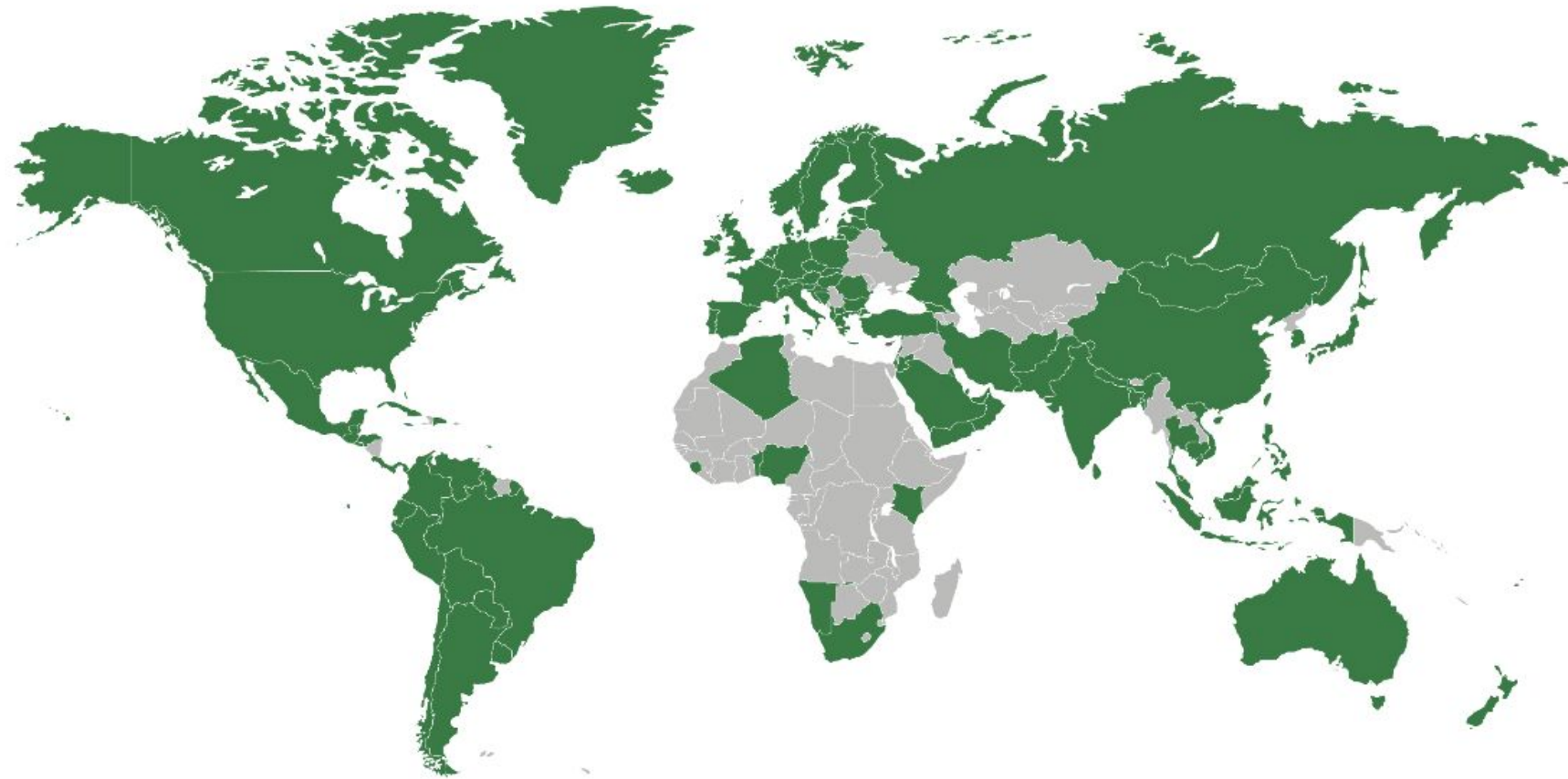
**Dietary  
Guidelines  
Initiative**

# What are dietary guidelines?

Food-based dietary guidelines (FBDGs) are a country-level level policy constituting what a healthy diet is in the country context.

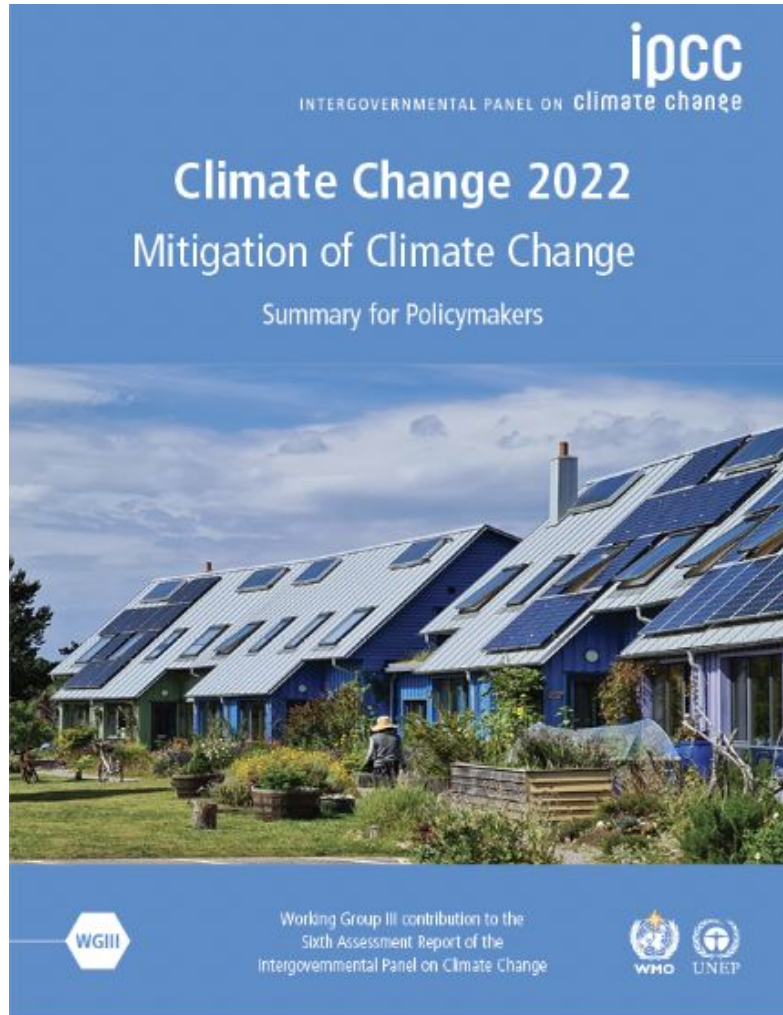


# In 2021, 111 countries had FBDGs...



● Countries with a dietary guideline

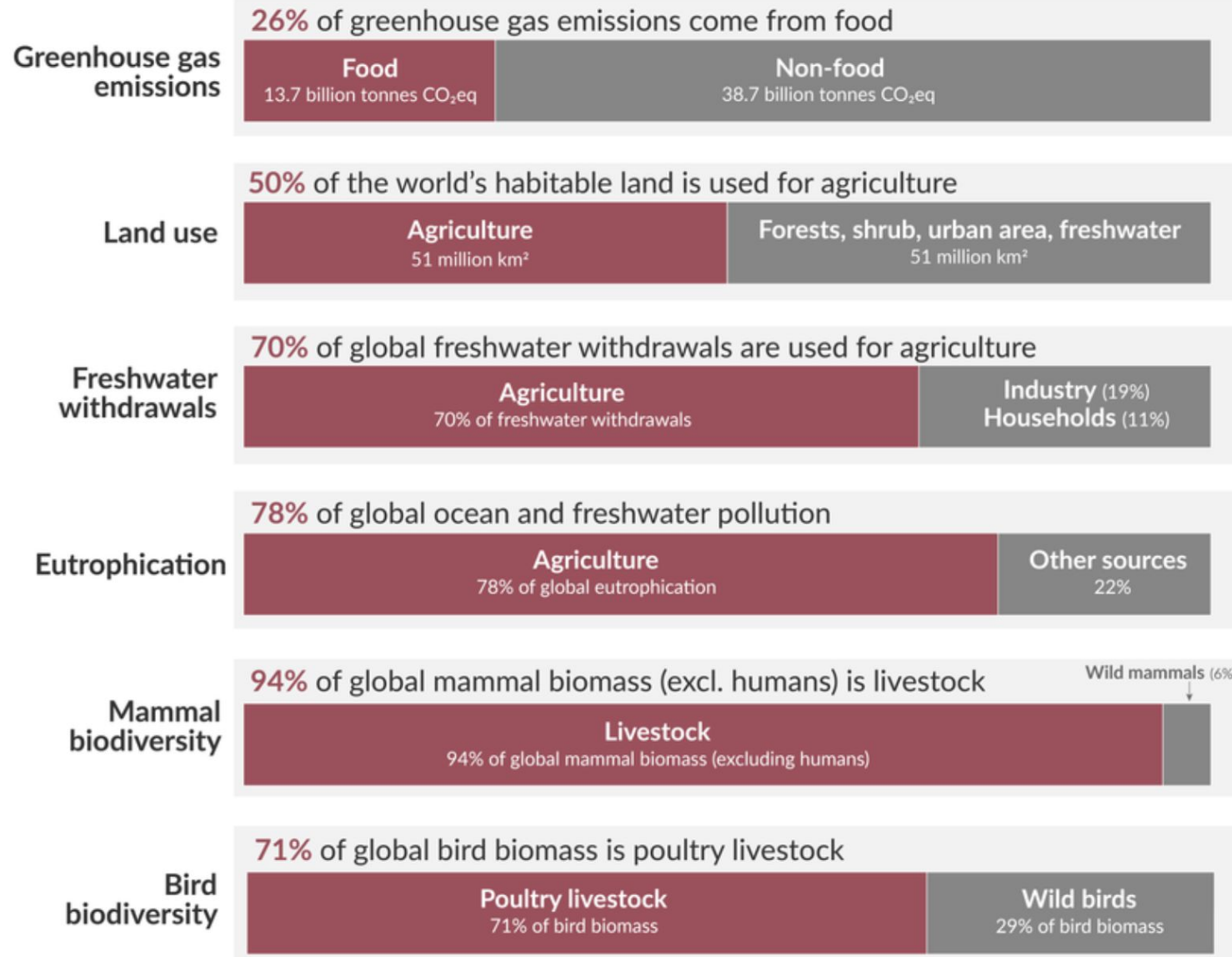
● Countries without a dietary guideline



Despite the fact that 1.5 billion people follow a vegetarian diet [...], **few FBDGs give recommendations for vegetarian diets.** An increase in consumption of plant-based food is a recurring recommendation in FBDGs, though **an explicit reduction or limit of animal source proteins is not often included** [...]. To account for changing dietary trends, however, **FBDGs need to incorporate sustainability aspects.**”

IPCC Report “Climate Change 2022 - Mitigation of Climate Change”, p. 2072

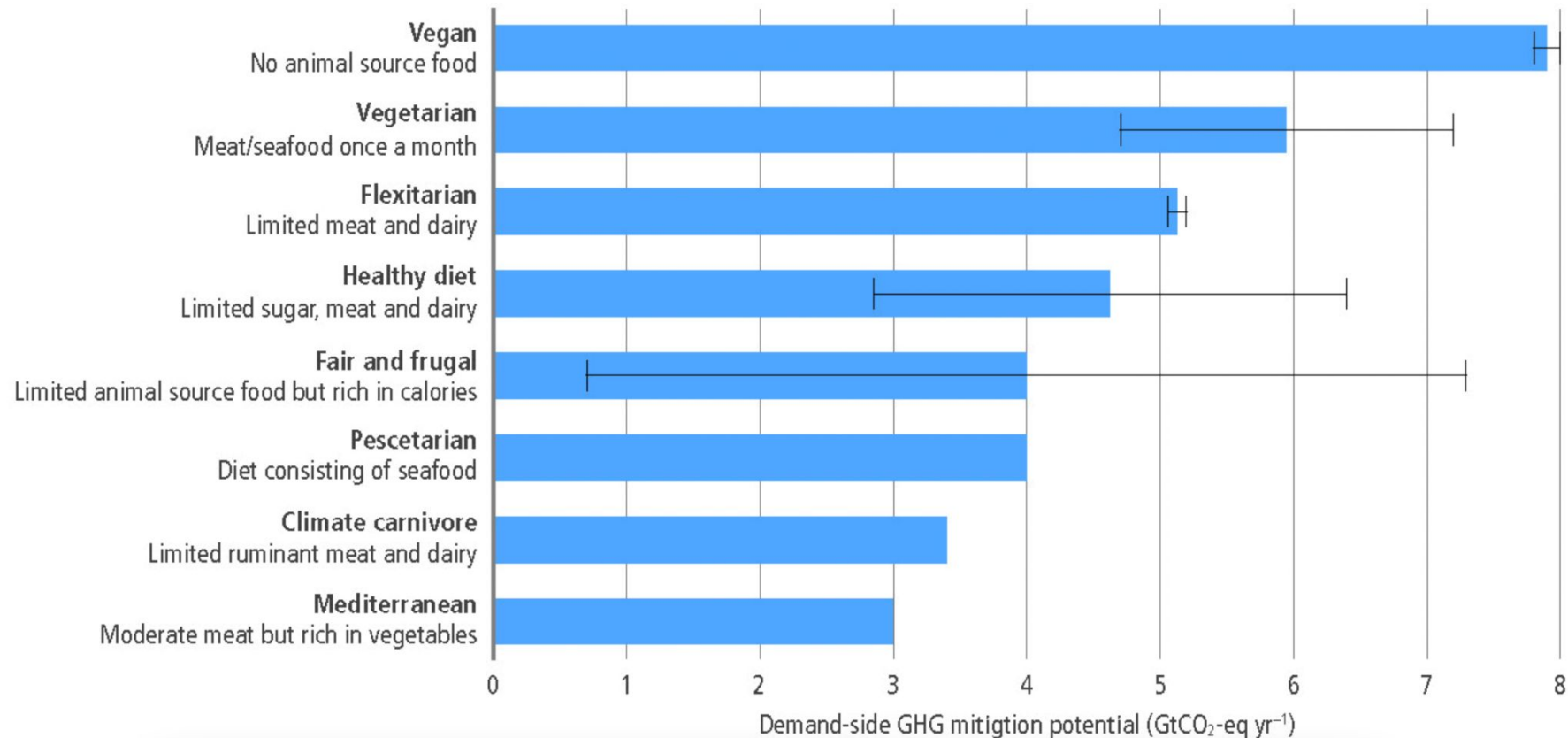
# The environmental impacts of food and agriculture

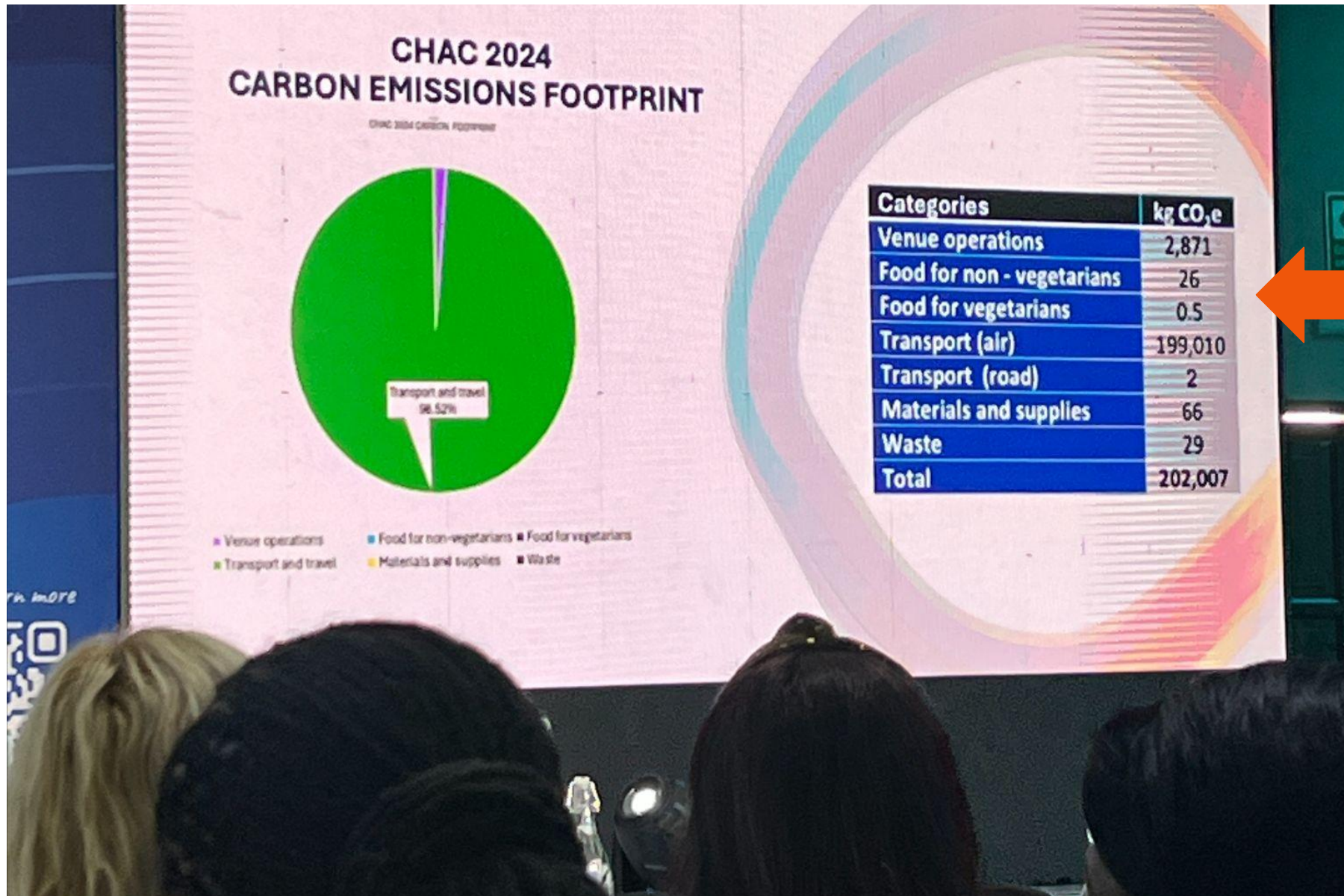


# Spectrum of plant-based diets

## Demand-side mitigation

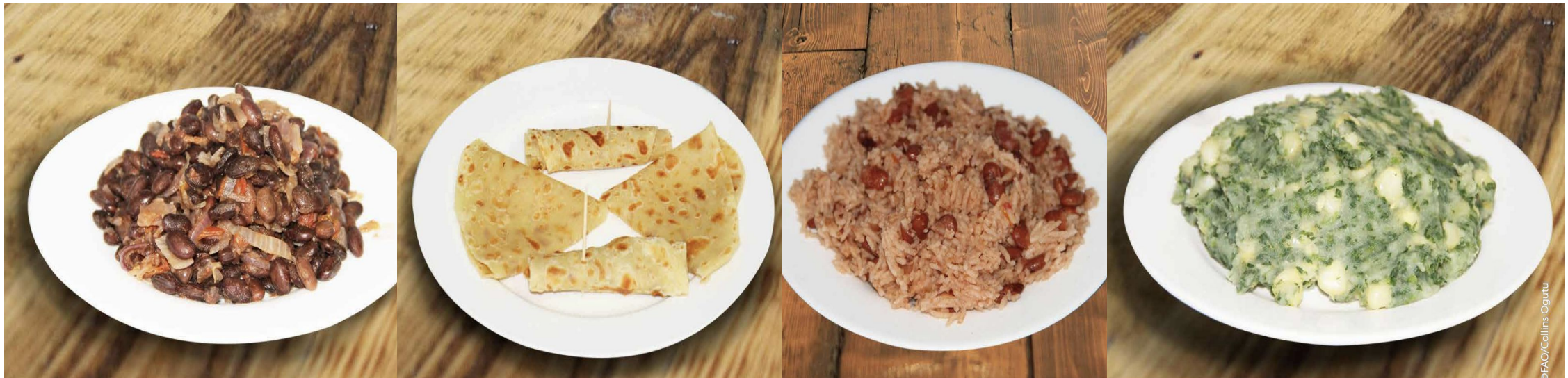
GHG mitigation potential of different diets





# Traditional African Diets

High in whole foods, indigenous fruits, vegetables and leafy greens, whole grains and legumes, with occasional animal product consumption.



# The Nutrition Transition

Urbanisation introduces Western dietary patterns and drives noncommunicable diseases.

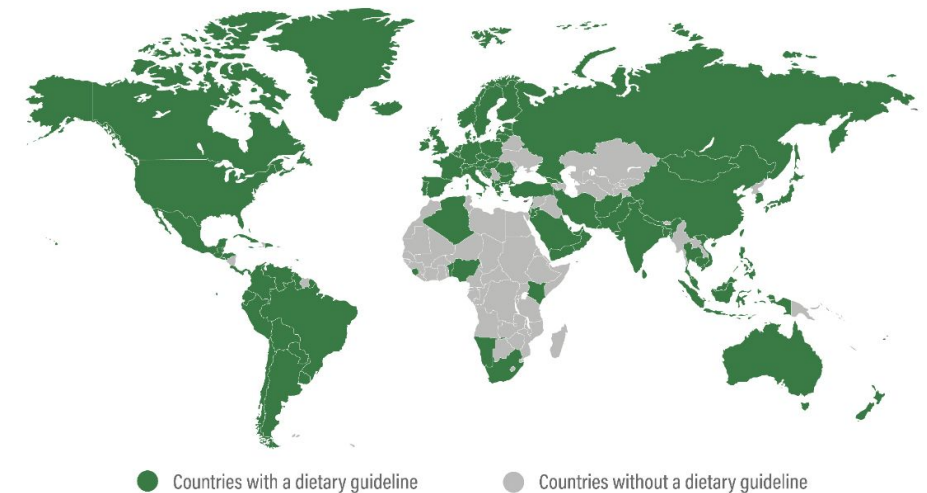
Obesity has...

**Doubled in 6 countries:** Kenya, Benin, Niger, Rwanda, Ivory Coast and Uganda

**Tripled in 6 countries:** Ghana, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Mali, Malawi and Tanzania

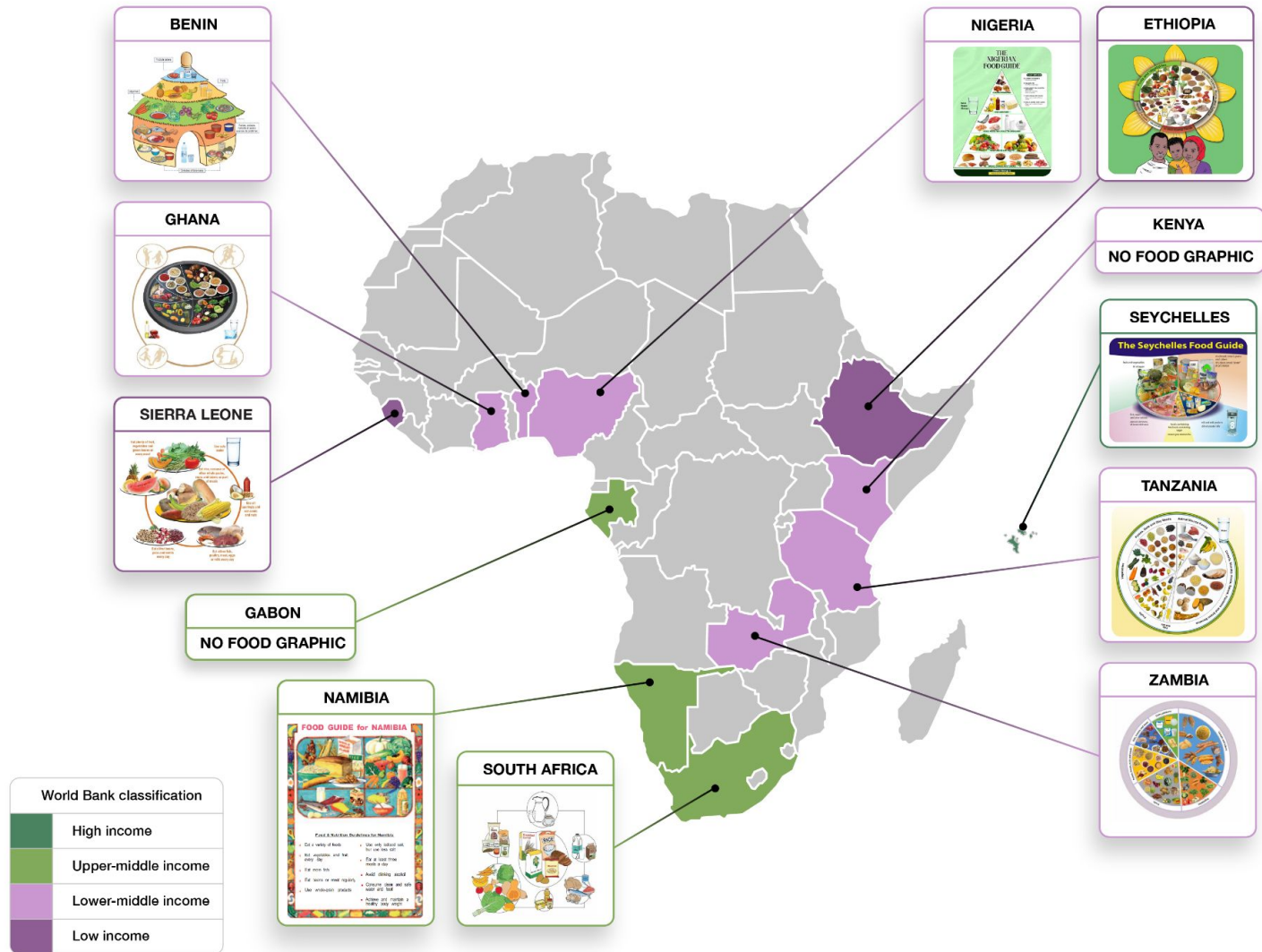
# Research objectives

1. Determine the extent of FBDGs in Africa
2. Determine their inclusivity of plant-based diets using the Balanced Food Choice Index



# Our findings:

12 African countries have FBDGs, only one-quarter of FAO African member countries.



# Balanced Food Choice Index

**Table 2:** African Food-Based Dietary Guidelines and their Balanced Food Choice Index scores

Ranking	Country	Score
1	South Africa	53
2	Namibia	45
3	Benin	33
3	Gabon	33
5	Zambia	32
6	Tanzania	21
7	Kenya	15
8	Ethiopia	13
9	Sierra Leone	11
10	Nigeria	3
11	Ghana	3
12	Seychelles	0

The index is a helpful tool for policymakers and health professionals to identify best practices and learn from the experience of other countries.

# Position for veg- diets

*“People choose to follow a vegetarian diet for a variety of reasons. Well-planned vegetarian diets can be both nutritious and healthy. These have been associated with a lower risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and certain types of cancer, and lower blood cholesterol levels. However, restrictive or unbalanced vegetarian diets may lead to nutritional deficiencies, particularly in situations of high metabolic demand. The nutrients of major concern in a vegetarian diet are protein, iron, calcium, vitamin B12 and n-3 fatty acids.”*

South Africa FBDG, 2013

# Only ¼ included sustainability

*“Eating a diet predominantly based on whole grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables, fish and insects is not only good for our health, but it is good for planetary health too. **Growing whole grains, legumes, fruit and vegetables, and producing fish and insects does not produce as much greenhouse gas as raising cattle or large livestock. Raising livestock produces 14.5 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions, with cattle (raised for both beef and milk, as well as for inedible outputs like manure and draft power) contributing 65 percent of the livestock sector’s emissions. Whole grains, pulses, fruits and vegetables, insects and fish also help reduce waste and lower pollution. Such a dietary pattern also reduces water and land use, slows deforestation and reduces the destruction of topsoil, among other benefits. Further, the FBDGs also encourage the consumption of fresh, unprocessed or minimally processed foods as a critical part of sustainable healthy diets.**”*

Zambia FBDG, 2021

Positive score:  
South Africa,  
Sierra Leone,  
Ethiopia

# Sustainability benefits of plant foods

*“Food system transformation processes that target improving diet quality must consider actions needed to increase production diversification, must include **production and productivity of legume crops.**”*

Ethiopia FBDG, 2022

Positive score:  
South Africa,  
Sierra Leone,  
Ethiopia

# Plant-based milk

*“Alternate between skimmed dairy products (milk, yoghurt) and cow’s milk substitutes (sole, white beans, soya, sesame) during the week”*

*[Translated from French]*

Gabon FBDG, 2021

Positive score:  
Benin, Gabon,  
Tanzania, South  
Africa

# Plant-based meat

*“Supper: Stewed matoke, soya meat, steamed amaranth, melon slice”*

Sample weekly menu, Kenya FBDG, 2017

Positive score:  
Benin, Gabon,  
Kenya, South Africa

# Recommendations

1. We urge the development of FBDG policies across the continent to guide healthy and climate-friendly dietary patterns
2. These guidelines should include more information on sustainability.
3. Include plant-based nutrition for health, environmental, ethical and economic reasons.
4. Learn from other countries on the continent that have done the work and have high scores

# Work with us

We are currently working with 20+ countries in consultation to balance their national dietary guidelines.

If you would like to join, contact me today at the conference or email: [nanine.wyma@pan-sa.org](mailto:nanine.wyma@pan-sa.org)



# Dietary Guidelines Initiative