

The save-the-world diet for athletes

By Ben Radding, Outside

The Mediterranean diet burst into American consciousness in the mid 1970s when renowned physiologist Ancel Keys began championing it as a heart-healthy way to eat. Since then, the primarily plant-based program has oscillated in popularity.

Now, researchers are bringing it back because they believe it could play a key role in curbing global warming – and keep you fit, with some important caveats.

“We analyzed how diets are changing in 100 countries around the world, the impacts of different food types on greenhouse gas emissions and land use, and the health impacts of different diets,” says physician David Tilman, author of a study of the Mediterranean and similar pescatarian and vegetarian diets published in the journal *Nature*. “What we found is that alternative diets that have less empty calories and less meat are much healthier for you and have significant environmental advantages.”

Between 1961 and 2009, people began consuming more meat and empty calories – calories from solid fats and added sugars, Tilman and his colleagues found. The researchers speculated that diets in 2050 would contain fewer servings of fruits and vegetables but 60 percent more empty calories and 25 to 50 percent more animal protein than the current American diet.

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