

Foodplate - a practical learning tool for smart choices of food

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Introduction:

Drivers of food choice are multidimensional. One should, simultaneously, take care of nutritional aspects, food safety, environmental values, ethical values and variably many others. In this type of context, training is needed to become a master. Otherwise choices turn out arbitrary or driven by incidental preferences. Without any rational help, it might be very difficult to maintain good practices even if environmental awareness is strong.

Objectives:

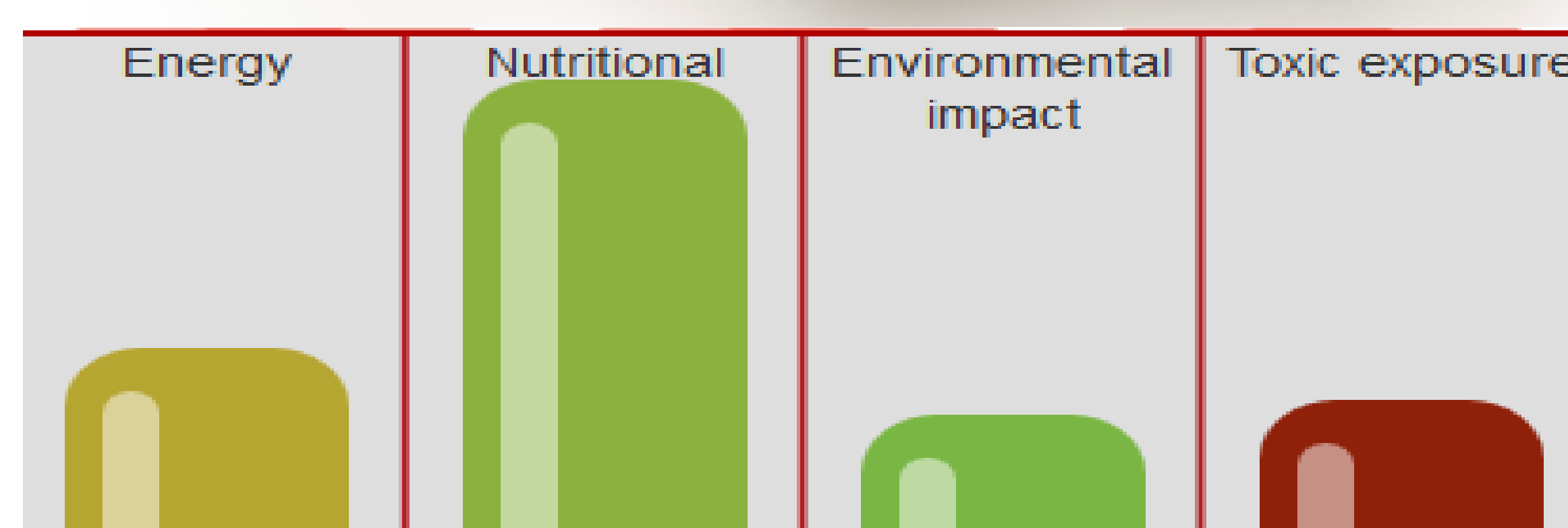
Foodplate is aimed to be a demonstrative tool, by which anyone could start to test own food choices in terms of risks coming from environment or risks directed to environment. With this training process, it would, also, be possible to build up common sense on environmental risk awareness and risk management.

Methods:

Foodplate application is one of educational materials and a tool to practice making healthy food choices. Choose a food item or ready-made meal at drop-down system and check healthiness and energy content from indicator bars.

There are indicator bars for energy, nutritional quality, environmental impacts and toxic exposure. The columns turning green, yellow or red behave with the same logic as traffic lights; red refers to high risk: the selected food portion is either below or far above nutrition energy recommendations, environmental based contaminant cause major risk or production of the portion cause extensive environmental impact.

When columns turn yellow or green the overall quality of the portion comes close to healthy, non-risky and environmentally aware type of choices. In addition to a single portion, the calculator can be used for building for instance two weeks diets, when also impact of the diversity of food items becomes visible.



Meaning of the colours of indicator bars:

- green –healthy, balanced or environmentally friendly choice, depending on the chart;
- yellow –values are either slightly too low or slightly too high according to the chart;
- red –unhealthy choice, or a choice that has a high environmental impact

Conclusion:

The basic overview and main principles can easily be drawn from the demonstration. Animal products have higher environmental impact, but to a certain extent higher nutritional value. Slice or two slices of cheese on bread raises both nutritional value and environmental impact of whole meal. Fishes are tricky; the nutritional value is high, but fishes may include contaminants and raise risk exposure. After several choices, a smart and diverse selection of raw materials seems to give the best overall result. Also modelling exercises support this assumption.

It is not so easy to compile a healthy meal, you can try yourself: <http://foodweb.ut.ee/foodplate/>