



One image from the world food map report | Photo source CIAT

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MAP SCORES SUSTAINABILITY OF GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEMS

 AGRICULTURE & ENERGY

Scoring takes into account not only food security, nutrition and environment, but also economic and social factors

Spotted: Researchers at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), based in Colombia, have developed a map that rates the sustainability of food systems across different countries. The map is a result of a study in which researchers attempted to empirically measure and characterise sustainability by considering not only food security, nutrition and environment, but also economic and social factors.

The term “food systems” refers to the entire web of food production and consumption, stretching from pre-production to food waste. This is a relatively new area of research, so there is not much uniformity in indicators used by researchers, governments and NGOs. This finding was aimed at standardising some of the methods used in such food systems research.

To create the map, the researchers sorted through two decades of scientific literature related to food systems. They focused on twenty indicators that can be used to track changes in sustainability over time and sorted them into four categories: environment, economic, social, and food and nutrition. They cover a range of factors, including greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, fair trade, changes to food prices over time, waste and the size of the female labour force.

Changes brought by global warming have led to a new focus on ways to improve food sustainability. A number of NGOs and businesses are working on solutions to this, that could help improve nutrition and food availability in the future. Springwise has recently covered a number of other innovations in this area, ranging from [cardboard terraces](#) to prevent soil erosion to [3D-printed meat](#).

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Website: ciat.cgiar.org; nature.com/articles/s41597-019-0301-5

Contact: ciat.cgiar.org/where-we-work

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Takeaway:

A better understanding of global food systems, and of how human diets affect climate change, is crucial to improving food sustainability. Global initiatives call for us to transform our diets, both for our health and the health of the planet, but there is little evidence of the effect of these proposed changes on overall, global food system sustainability. The CAIT map helps address some of these knowledge gaps, and allows policy-makers to better face the challenges related to food quality and food security.