

Health and Dietary Practices as Indicators of Ecological Awareness

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Abstract. Although the global food system causes many environmental problems, industrially grown food continues to be produced and consumed. Heavily processed foods which travel long distances contribute to a range of health problems. Not everyone is aware of the environmental problems associated with the global food economy. The environmental impact of dietary practices can be quantified via the Ecological Footprint Quiz. This study focuses on health and dietary practice as proxies for environmental awareness, and is designed to detect any correlation between preferred health care system, dietary practices, and Ecological Footprint size. Three-hundred sixteen (316) UC Berkeley students were surveyed. Data shows that students who favor western allopathic medicine have higher energy diets consisting of more processed, resource-intensive food, and have a higher food EF size. These results help to understand how a broader ecological awareness affects various lifestyle choices that impact the environment. These findings illuminate the importance of educational programs informing people about the global food system and how a shift towards a local food economy would benefit both human health and the environment.