



Development. Here's why.

## Environment

Unlike meat (<https://earth911.com/how-and-buy/bad-better-best-climate-impact-of-meat/>) production, which accounts for nearly 10% of the average American's climate emissions, legumes have a positive environmental impact (<https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-pulses-day>). The nitrogen-fixing properties of pulses improve soil fertility, which improves farmland productivity while simultaneously reducing the need ([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222522632\\_Legume\\_versus\\_fertilizer\\_sources\\_of\\_nitrogen\\_Ecological\\_tradeoffs\\_and\\_human\\_needs](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222522632_Legume_versus_fertilizer_sources_of_nitrogen_Ecological_tradeoffs_and_human_needs)) for fertilizers.

When produced as a crop for human consumption, they enable countries to reduce food imports (<https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/legumes/88777/>), which also reduces emissions related to transportation. When grown as a cover crop, they improve farm and soil biodiversity. This supports healthy ecosystems and can reduce the need for pesticides.



LEGUMES CONTRIBUTE TO GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY BECAUSE THEY STORE WELL, ARE INEXPENSIVE TO BUY, AND ARE EASY TO GROW. IMAGE BY STOCKSNAP FROM PIXABAY

# Nutrition

Eating a vegetarian or vegan diet is one of [the most effective ways](https://earth911.com/home-garden/good-better-best-cut-carbon-from-diet/) to lower your carbon emissions. But people who are accustomed to a meat-heavy diet often wonder how vegetarians get enough protein. The secret is legume vegetables. Pulses are a critical [protein source](https://earth911.com/how-and-buy/good-better-best-vegetarian-protein/) for maintaining a healthy meat-free diet.

Pulses are healthy [by a number of other measures, too](http://www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1176990/); they are low-salt, cholesterol-free, iron-rich foods with a low glycemic index. The nutritional benefits of pulses are enhanced when [combined with other foods](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/pulses-2016/docs/factsheets/Nutrition_EN_PRINT.pdf). Combined with grains, they produce a complete protein and help the body absorb minerals better. Iron absorption is improved when vitamin C is included in the meal (for example by sprinkling lemon juice on lentils).

Diners in developed countries may need to adjust to the idea that a vegetarian diet is enough. But pulses are a sign of plenty in the poorest countries. They contribute to global food security because they store well, are inexpensive to buy, and are [easy to grow](https://earth911.com/home-garden/urban-farming-10-crops-you-can-grow-at-home/).



## Eating Legumes

People around the world have long known how effective legumes are for staving off hunger and staying healthy. But as incomes have risen in recent decades, traditional dishes like beans and rice ([https://oldwayspt.org/system/files/atoms/files/TradDiet\\_BeansRice.pdf](https://oldwayspt.org/system/files/atoms/files/TradDiet_BeansRice.pdf)) have declined in popularity, stigmatized as food for poor people. The myriad dishes combining these two staples are still well worth exploring.

But even foodies who eschew humble dishes can find new kinds of beans (<http://www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1372965/>) to try and interesting bean recipes (<http://www.fao.org/pulses-2016/recipes/en/>) from around the world. Cookbooks like Cool Beans (<https://amzn.to/3dwgOw6>) and Out of the Pod (<https://amzn.to/3pIDA6s>) include hundreds of recipes, proving that beans are anything but boring. And you don't have to spend money to find new ways to prepare your pulses. As part of the 2016 Year of Pulses campaign, the United Nations produced a free book, Pulses: Nutritious Seeds for a Sustainable Future (<http://www.fao.org/3/i5528e/i5528e.pdf>). It explores the nutrition, cultivation, and place in food culture (with recipes by internationally respected chefs) around the world.

And even if they claim to hate vegetables, it is possible to get kids to #lovepulses (<http://www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1126738/>) by tweaking your preparation methods and introducing new dishes – black bean chocolate cake anyone?

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