# Plant points and 30 different plants a week drive a shift in UK dietary habits



Recent discussions within nutrition circles have focused on promoting a plant-forward diet as a way to improve health outcomes, with particular emphasis on the concept of 'plant points'. This idea encourages individuals to consume a diverse range of plant-based foods, aiming for a target of thirty different plants each week. The drive towards this dietary approach is supported by various health experts who emphasise the importance of dietary variety for optimal gut health and overall well-being.

The Japanese diet serves as a prominent example of how dietary diversity contributes to longevity. Research by Tsuduki Tsuyoshi, an associate professor at Tohoku University, highlights that the traditional Japanese meal structure, often comprising multiple small dishes, plays a significant role in maintaining a balanced intake of various nutrients. This dietary model typically includes a variety of soy products, vegetables, fish, and other plant-based ingredients.

In recent years, the '30 plants a week' initiative has gained traction, partly due to findings from studies including the American Gut Project, which suggests that participants consuming at least 30 different plant foods tend to show improved gut microbiome diversity. Further analysis by the UK-based personalised nutrition app Zoe corroborates these findings, indicating that a varied plant-rich diet correlates with a healthier composition of gut microbes. As Tim Spector, founder of Zoe, noted, “We found that a plant-rich diet, particularly one high in a variety of fruits and vegetables, leads to a healthier microbiome composition.”

As such, various food brands have begun to market their products in ways that align with this philosophy. For instance, UK plant-based brand Gosh! has redesigned its packaging to highlight the number of plant points in its products, making it easier for consumers to monitor their intake. An example includes the brand’s Caponata Burger, which contains eight plant points due to its various ingredients such as aubergine and courgette.

Although the notion of consuming thirty different plants may initially sound daunting, the concept encompasses a wide range of foods, including whole grains, nuts, seeds, herbs, and spices. This broad definition makes it relatively straightforward to achieve, as even common items like coffee and dark chocolate can contribute to the count. However, not all plant-based inputs contribute equally; for instance, refined products like white bread do not count towards the goal, while their whole-grain counterparts do.

This movement towards incorporating more plant-based foods may be influenced by broader global dietary trends. In the US, meat sales reached unprecedented levels in 2024, despite recommendations to cut back on red and processed meat for health reasons. Similarly, in the UK, a survey indicated that a notable percentage of young people are increasing their meat consumption, even while acknowledging the environmental implications of such choices. Evidence from campaigns promoting plant-based diets, such as Meatless Mondays and Veganuary, has shown limited effectiveness in shifting consumer behaviour.

The concept of 'plant points' may also incorporate elements of gamification, akin to the successful Weight Watchers programme, which assigns points to various foods to encourage better dietary choices. This simplicity in tracking could prove to be an appealing strategy for those seeking to enhance their nutrition without the need for extensive dietary restrictions.

Recent studies have shown that a significant number of consumers are interested in sustainable food options. According to research by the public health group NSF, while a large portion of the British population reads food labels, there is a disparity in perceived usefulness of these labels, particularly among age groups. Notably, younger consumers tend to trust health claims more than older demographics.

Moreover, many individuals express a willingness to pay a premium for sustainably packaged foods, reflecting an inclination towards eco-friendly products. Insights from YouGov polls reveal that a considerable percentage of consumers would consider purchasing meat alternatives if they had better environmental ratings. These trends suggest a growing awareness and desire for healthier, more sustainable food choices among the public.

In summary, the rise of 'plant points' and the '30 plants a week' concept appear to be contributing to a gradual shift in dietary habits, potentially catalysed by consumer demand for greater transparency and sustainability in food labelling. As brands like Gosh! aim to facilitate this transition, the integration of plant-based nutrition could play an increasingly significant role in both personal health and environmental considerations in the years to come.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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