

Letters to the Editor

Reply to Lucas and Willett—A Score Derived From the Canadian Food Guide for Assessing Diet Quality: A Risky Illusion?



To the Editor:

We thank our colleague Michel Lucas and Walter Willett for their comment regarding our recent analysis of the dietary habits of French-speaking adults in the province of Quebec.¹ We agree that dietary recommendations formulated in the 2007 version of Canada's Food Guide are outdated, and arguably challengeable. However, until new dietary recommendations are clearly defined, it remains relevant to measure the population's adherence to current guidelines, which is what the Canadian version of the Healthy Eating Index 2005 (C-HEI) does.²

We would also like to point out that the C-HEI does not completely ignore foods such as processed meats and sugary drinks, as suggested by Lucas and Willett. Indeed, these foods are penalizing the C-HEI by being accounted for in the "other foods" component of the metric.² We also stress that the C-HEI does not provide a metric for the total amount of fat in the diet, as suggested by Lucas and Willett, whereas the amount of unsaturated fat is positively scored in the C-HEI.² Nevertheless, additional analyses revealed a strong correlation between the C-HEI and the Healthy Eating Index (HEI)-2015 ($r = 0.85$; $P < 0.0001$). The HEI-2015 describes adherence to the most recent dietary guidelines for Americans.³ The C-HEI also correlated with the Alternative HEI-2010 ($r = 0.64$; $P < 0.0001$), one of the diet quality metrics discussed by Lucas and Willett. Bland-Altman 95% limits of agreement were acceptable in both cases (C-HEI vs

HEI-2015: 84% to 143%; C-HEI vs Alternative HEI-2010: 60% to 134%). Finally, the mean HEI-2015 (59.3/100) and Alternative HEI-2010 (53.4/110) were both below 60% in our study (unpublished results).

We applaud the fact that Canada's Food Guide has recently been updated on the basis of the best and most recent evidence. Nevertheless, our data, irrespective of the metric used, suggest that the relatively poor diet quality among French-speaking adults in the Province of Quebec is not an illusion.

Didier Brassard, RD, MSc
Benoît Lamarche, PhD, FAHA
Benoit.Lamarche@fsaa.ulaval.ca

Disclosures

D.B. has received a speaking honorarium from the Dairy Farmers of Canada in 2018. B.L. is Chair of Nutrition at Laval University, which is supported by private endowments from Pfizer, La Banque Royale du Canada and Provigo-Loblaws.

References

1. Brassard D, Laramée C, Corneau L, et al. Poor adherence to dietary guidelines among French-speaking adults in the Province of Quebec Canada - the PREDISE Study. *Can J Cardiol* 2018;34:1665-73.
2. Garriguet D. Diet quality in Canada. *Health Rep* 2009;20:41-52.
3. Reedy J, Lerman JL, Krebs-Smith SM, et al. Evaluation of the Healthy Eating Index-2015. *J Acad Nutr Diet* 2018;118:1622-33.