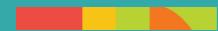


2023 Sustainability and Food Insights Dietitian Survey

FOOD + PLANET

Today's Dietitian



NOVEMBER 8, 2023



Table of Contents



PART 1 Introduction

05 Overview

06 Executive Summary

Gaps

Opportunities

Solutions

09 Methodology



PART 2 Respondent Demographics

11 Geography
and Areas of Practice

12 Patient/Client
Engagement

13 Sustainability
Education Level



PART 3 Survey Analysis

15 2023 Sustainability
and Food Insights
Responses



PART 4 Conclusion

22 Limitations

23 Conclusion

25 Next Steps

Survey Partners

FOOD + PLANET



ROLE

Survey Design

Food + Planet is a collective, visionary 501c3 founded in 2020 by four registered dietitians. Our aim is to empower healthcare professionals to be leaders in sustainable food systems. We envision a science and practice of nutrition that honors nature as the foundation of health, through the four dimensions of sustainability. With high levels of trust from the public and expertise in food and nutrition science, health professionals are perfectly positioned to advance the future of food for the well-being of our world.

www.foodandplanet.org

Today's Dietitian



ROLE

Survey Execution

Today's Dietitian is the leading independent source for news, information, research, and professional trends for registered dietitians. Today's Dietitian is also a leading producer of accredited continuing education activities for registered dietitians and other healthcare professionals.

www.todaysdietitian.com

JOHNS HOPKINS CENTER for A LIVABLE FUTURE



ROLE

Survey Analysis

The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF) works with students, educators, researchers, policymakers, advocacy organizations and communities to build a healthier, more equitable and resilient food system.

<https://clf.jhsph.edu/>

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PART 1

Introduction

- Overview
- Executive Summary
 - Gaps
 - Opportunities
 - Solutions
- Methodology



Overview

The purpose of the first annual *Sustainability and Food Insights Survey* is to better understand dietitians' **knowledge, attitudes, and practices** around sustainable diets, which is particularly useful given registered dietitians (RDs) are one of the most trusted voices on diet and nutrition within the public. This survey also aims to capture **real-time sustainability insights** of the nutrition professional community, and to measure changes over time.

The findings of this year's online survey of **1,161 RDs** focused on their:

- 1. Perceptions on how to promote** sustainable food systems
- 2. Practical application opportunities** for incorporating sustainability into their work settings
- 3. Knowledge on the best strategies** to guide people toward sustainable diets
- 4. Confidence in guiding clients** on sustainable food choices
- 5. Barriers** for implementing sustainable diets in their professional practices
- 6. Beliefs in the importance of integrating** sustainability science into USDA Dietary Guidelines



Use

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Executive Summary: Gaps

This survey uncovered the following key insights surrounding gaps, opportunities, and solutions for advancing sustainable food systems (SFS) within the nutrition profession.

Gaps

There is a major gap in sustainability education and knowledge in the field of nutrition. RDs overwhelmingly want to be part of the sustainability movement, but report they have significant barriers in doing so.

 Over **9 in 10 (95%)** registered dietitians believe **RDs should be involved** in advocating for sustainable food systems; **40%** believe dietitians should be **“very involved”** in SFS. However, only **13% received formal training** in SFS.

 Almost all (**98%**) RDs report they have **barriers to advancing SFS**: **37%** of RDs reported that **lack of knowledge, tools, and resources** were key barriers to advancing SFS, and **30%** of RDs reported that **lack of access and affordability** as the key barrier to advancing SFS in their communities.

 **42%** of RDs **do not incorporate sustainability** into their work.

 **69%** of RDs **do not feel confident or feel neutral** about **providing guidance** on sustainable food choices.

Executive Summary: Opportunities

Several exciting opportunities for nutrition professionals to engage in SFS were revealed in the survey analysis.

Opportunities

There is a major gap in sustainability education and knowledge in the field of nutrition. RDs overwhelmingly want to be part of the sustainability movement, but report they have significant barriers in doing so.

2.6x RDs who receive **formal training** or education are **2.6x** more likely to incorporate sustainability into their practices.

 Almost **2 in 3 (64%)** RDs believe their clients are **moderately** to **very interested** in sustainability.

 **62%** of RDs believe sustainability science should be formally integrated into the **USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans**.

 Among areas of sustainability, RDs reported their biggest opportunities to deepen their knowledge are within the **planetary and sociocultural dimensions** of sustainable diets, including:

-  **Agriculture practices** and **environmental impacts** of food choices (**28%**)
-  **Ethical labor, sourcing,** and **climate justice** (**23%**)

-  **Soil health** and **biodiversity** (**20%**)
-  Providing equitable guidance through a **culturally inclusive lens** (**18%**)

An opportunity exists to further understand **the disparity between how RDs** in the US view the impact of sustainable diet practices compared to evidence-based global food based dietary guidelines that incorporate sustainability. When guiding people towards sustainable diets, **RDs ranked**:

-  **Having the greatest impact:** fewer ultra-processed foods, a focus on local/seasonal foods, and reducing food waste
-  **Having the least impact:** regenerative or organic agriculture practices, and sustainable meat and seafood

Executive Summary: Solutions

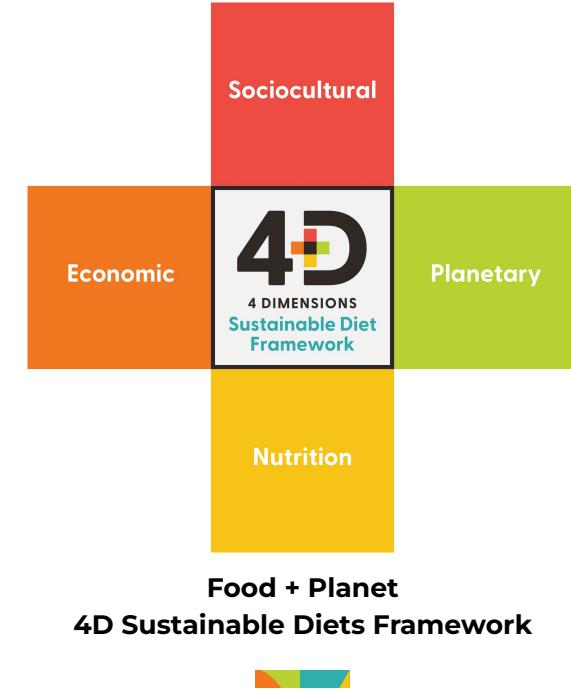
Solutions for addressing the education and knowledge gaps of the nutrition profession involve advancing education opportunities in a variety of settings.

Solutions

These data demonstrate the need for **advancing formal training** on SFS within the dietetic profession, across dietetic programs, dietetic internships, advanced education, and continuing professional education.

A focus on providing education on areas that RDs have less familiarity with, including the **planetary and sociocultural dimensions** of sustainable diets, are a high priority in order to close the education, knowledge, and confidence gap.

Dietitians who work within companies and organizations, such as hospitals, foodservice, and retail settings, require **SFS education as a critical step** for advancing their sustainability engagement within communities.



Food + Planet is actively incorporating these survey results to guide their [mission](#) of empowering 1 million nutrition professionals to advance sustainable food systems by 2025.

Methodology

Survey Details

This online survey was conducted by **Today's Dietitian** using **Survey Monkey** online polling software.

Survey Duration:
April 28 - May 24, 2023

Total Questions: **18**

Analysis Details

Survey analysis was conducted by **Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future** using **Python** and **Excel**.

Margin of Error:
Approximately **2.86%**
(at a 95% confidence level)

Primary Population

Registered Dietitians / Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (**RDs/RDNs**) in the US.

Number of RDs practicing in the United States¹:
111,7101

Survey Metrics

Participants: **N=1,161**

PART 2

Respondent Demographics

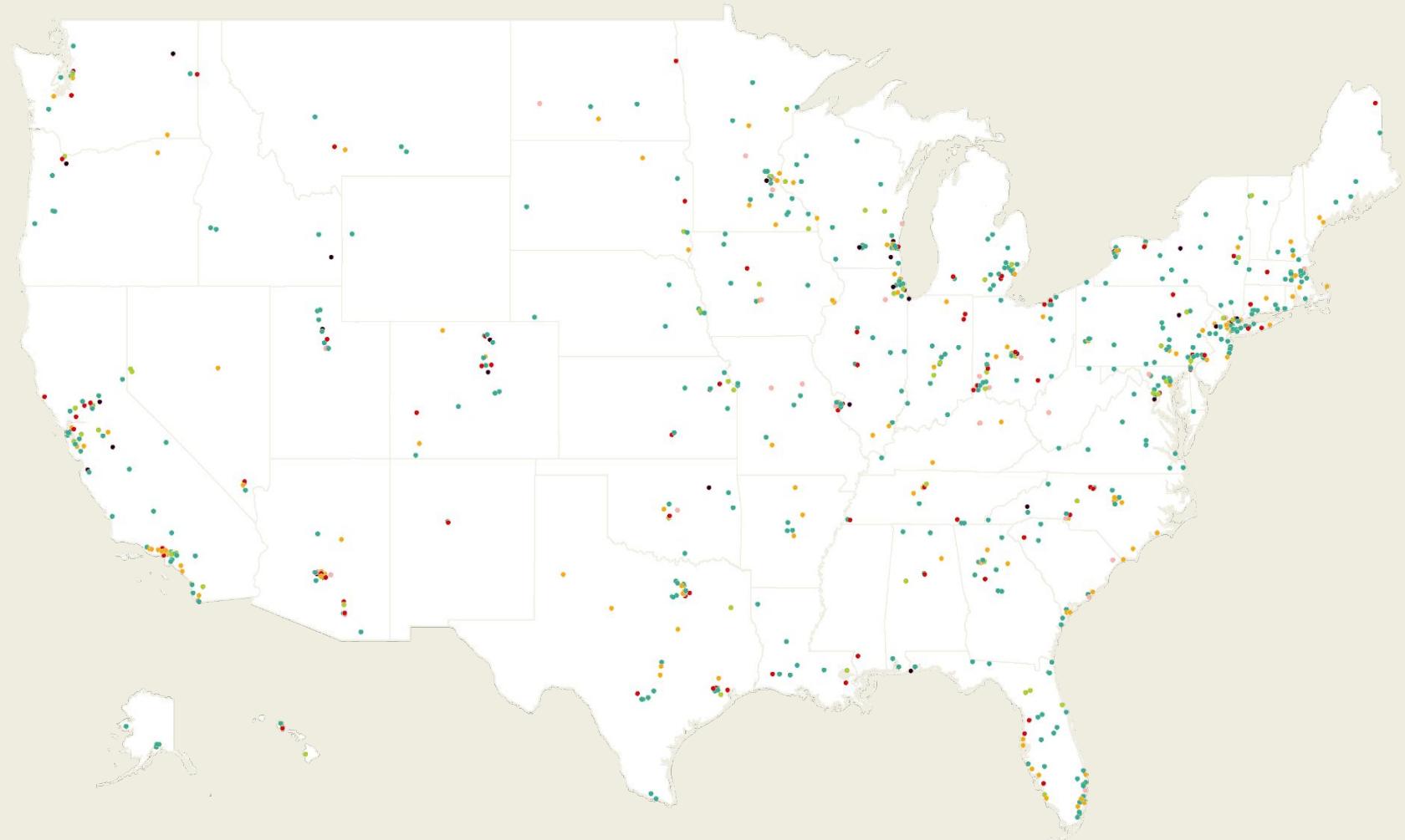
- Geography and Areas of Practice
- Practice Engagement
- Sustainability Education Level



Respondent Geography and Area of Practice

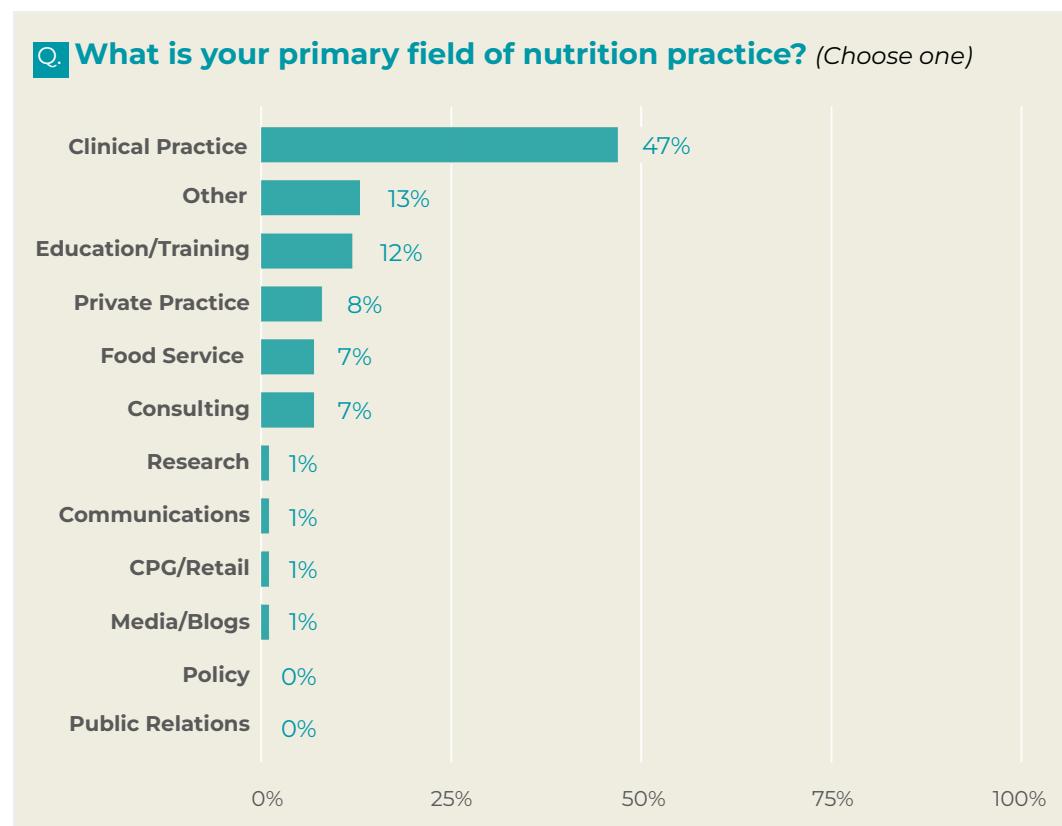
- Clinical Care
- Community and Public Health
- Consulting and Private Practice
- Education and Research
- Food Service and Food Retail
- Other

Q. In which zip code do you typically practice?

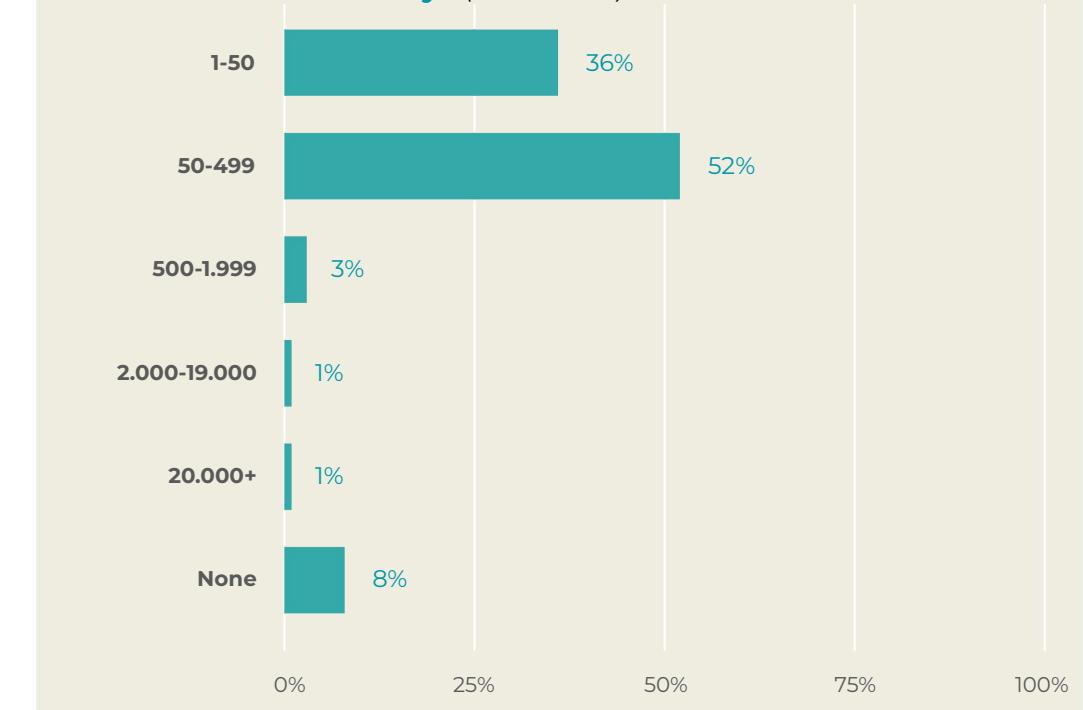


Practice Area

Nearly half of respondents practice in a clinical setting (**47%**), followed by other (**13%**), education (**12%**), private practice (**8%**), food service (**7%**), and consulting (**7%**) settings.



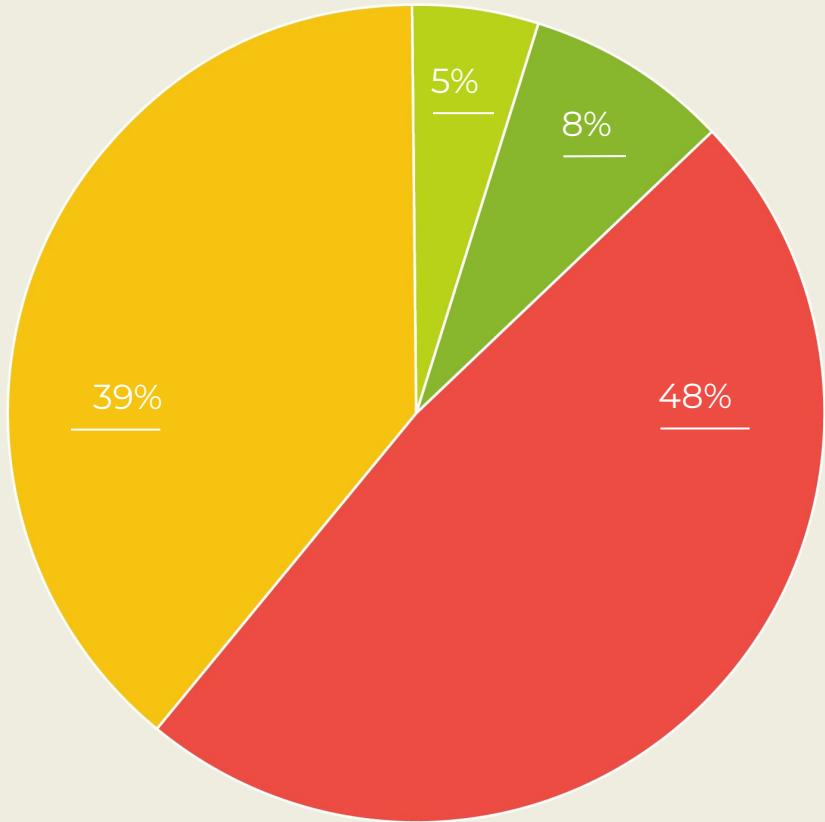
Q. On average, how many clients, patients, or consumers do you interact with monthly? (Choose one)



Engagement

On average, respondents interact with **194 clients, patients, or consumers each month**; over half interact with 50-499 per month.

Q. What level of sustainability education have you received?
(Choose one)



Sustainability Education

Almost half (48%) of RDs have informal training or no training at all.

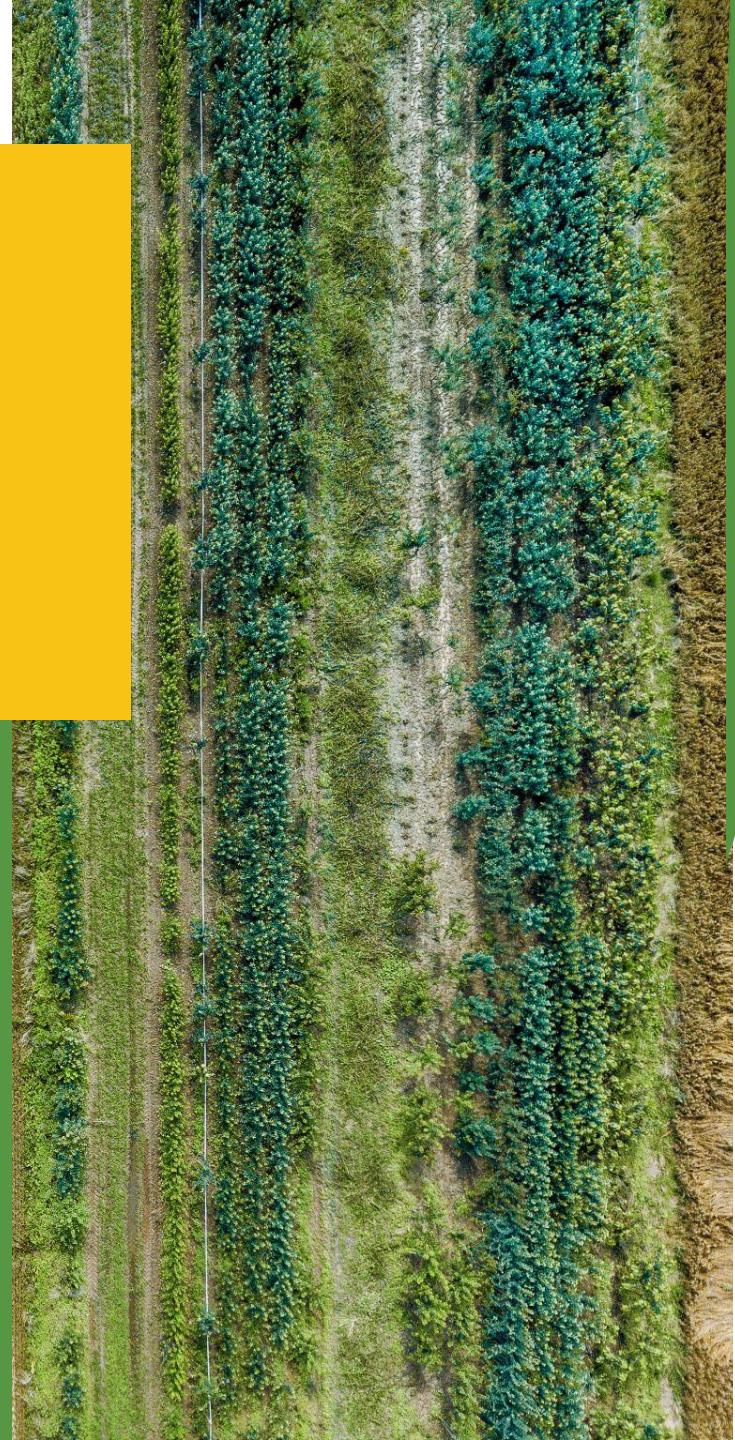
For those who have received formal training, 13% did so via their dietetic internship and/or advanced degree programs, and 39% through semi-formal training such as online courses and webinars.

- Informal or no training
- Semi-formal (online courses, webinars, CPEs)
- Internship (RDN, DTR)
- Advanced degree (BS, MS, PhD)

PART 3

Survey Responses

■ 2023 Sustainability and Food Insights
Survey Responses



The vast majority of RDs believe they should be involved in sustainability, yet many don't incorporate it into their work.

Over **9 in 10** (95%) dietitians believe they should be involved in advocating for sustainable food systems; **40%** believe dietitians should be “very involved”.

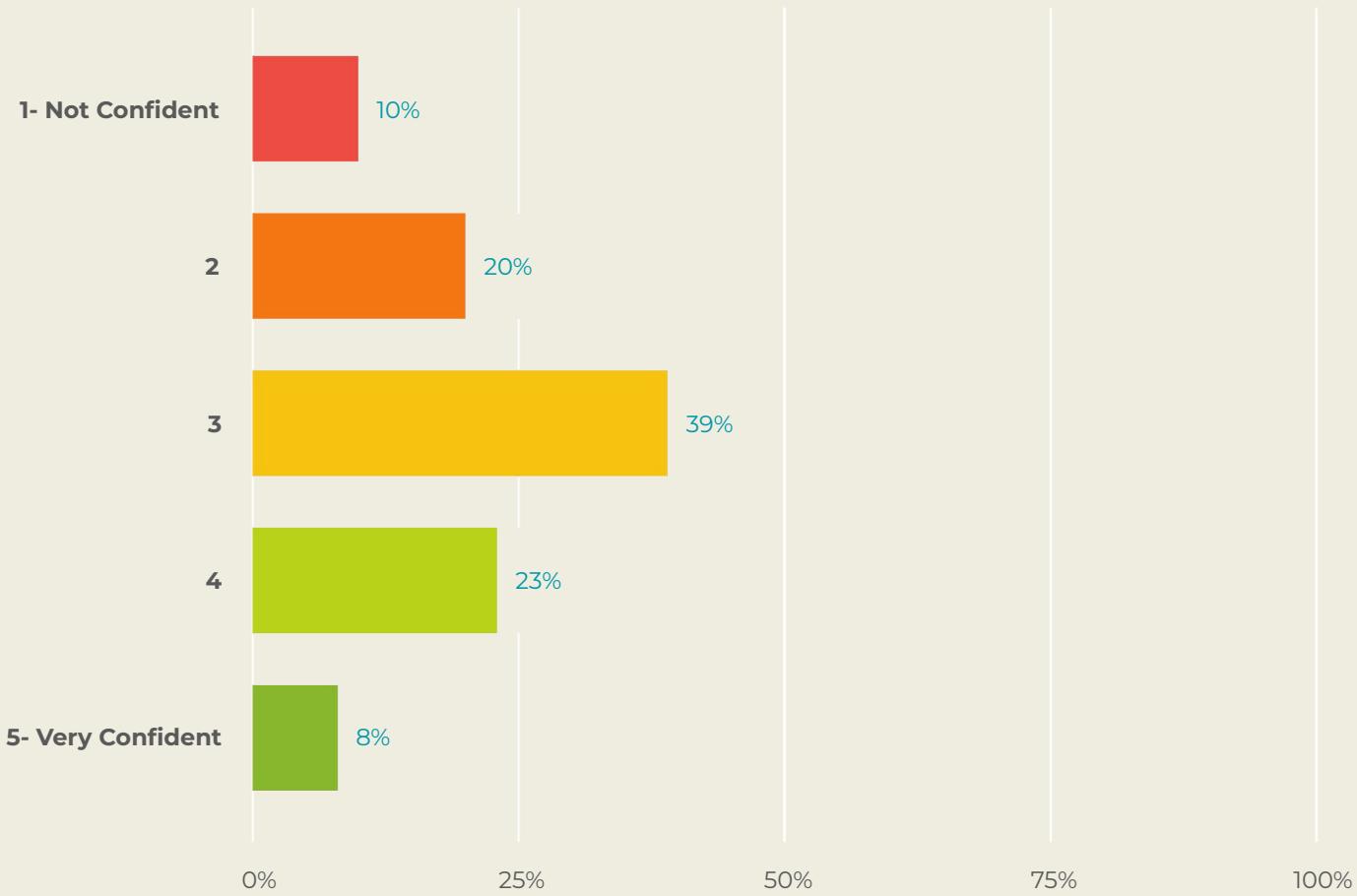


Less than half (**42%**) of RDs report that they do not incorporate sustainability into their work.



Q How confident do you feel in your ability to provide guidance on sustainable food choices to your clients, patients, or audiences?

(1 = Not Confident through 5 = Most Confident)

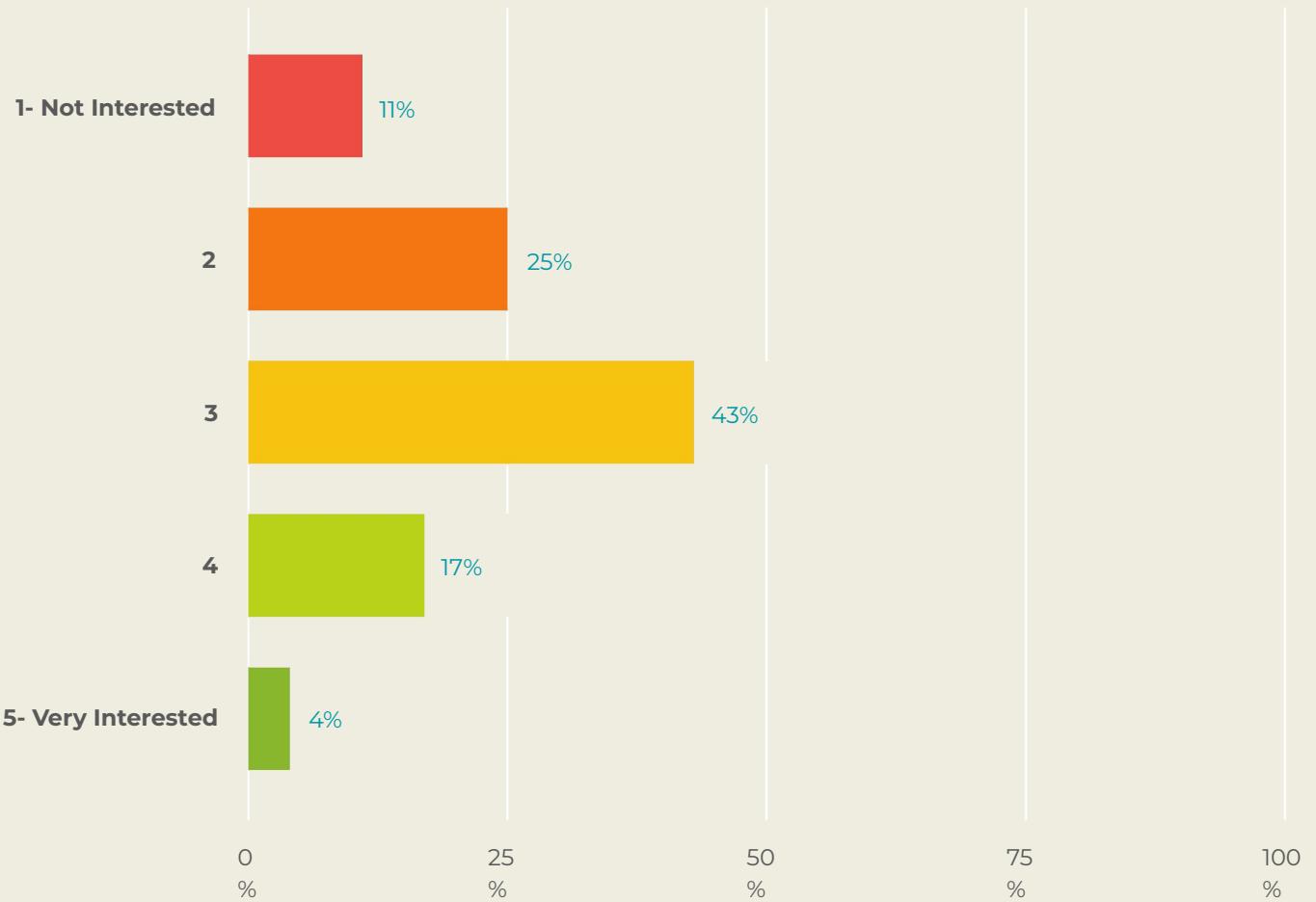


Only **4 in 10** RDs rate themselves as moderately confident in providing guidance on sustainable food choices; **8%** say they feel “most confident”, while **10%** say they feel “not confident”.

More than **2 out of 3** RDs feel that their clients are interested in sustainability; **64%** believe that their clients are “moderately” to “very interested”.

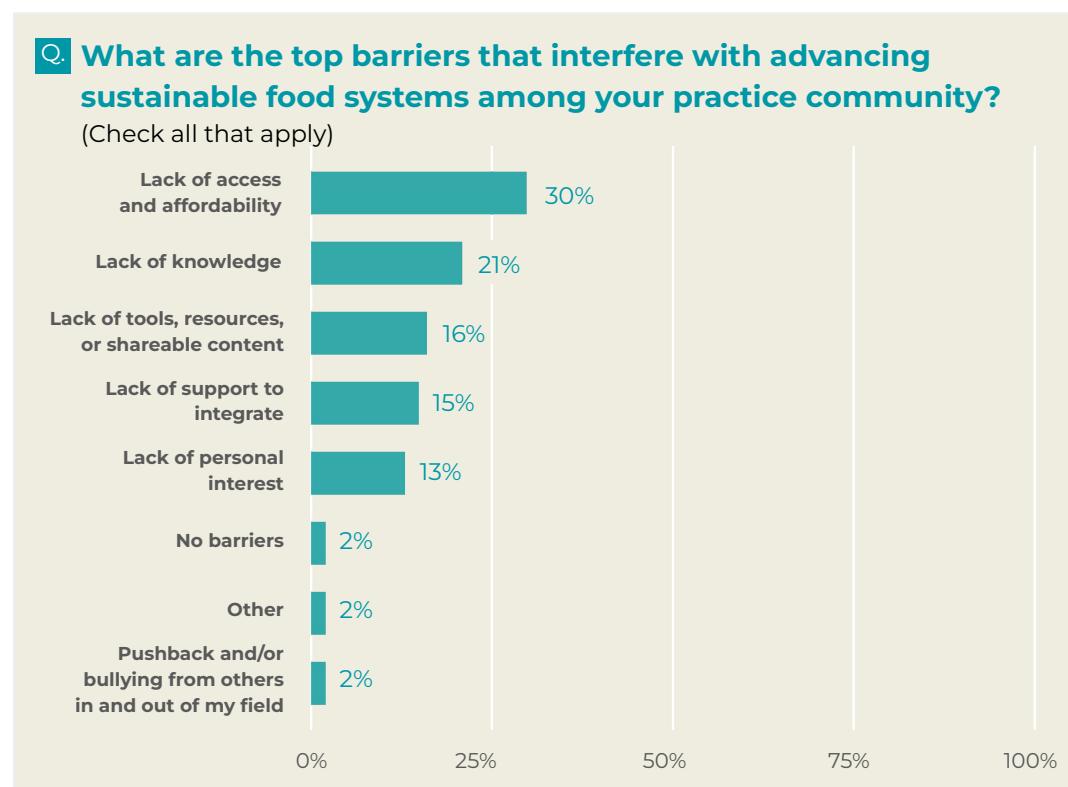
Q. **How interested do you feel your clients are about sustainability?**

(1 = Not Interested through 5 = Most Interested)

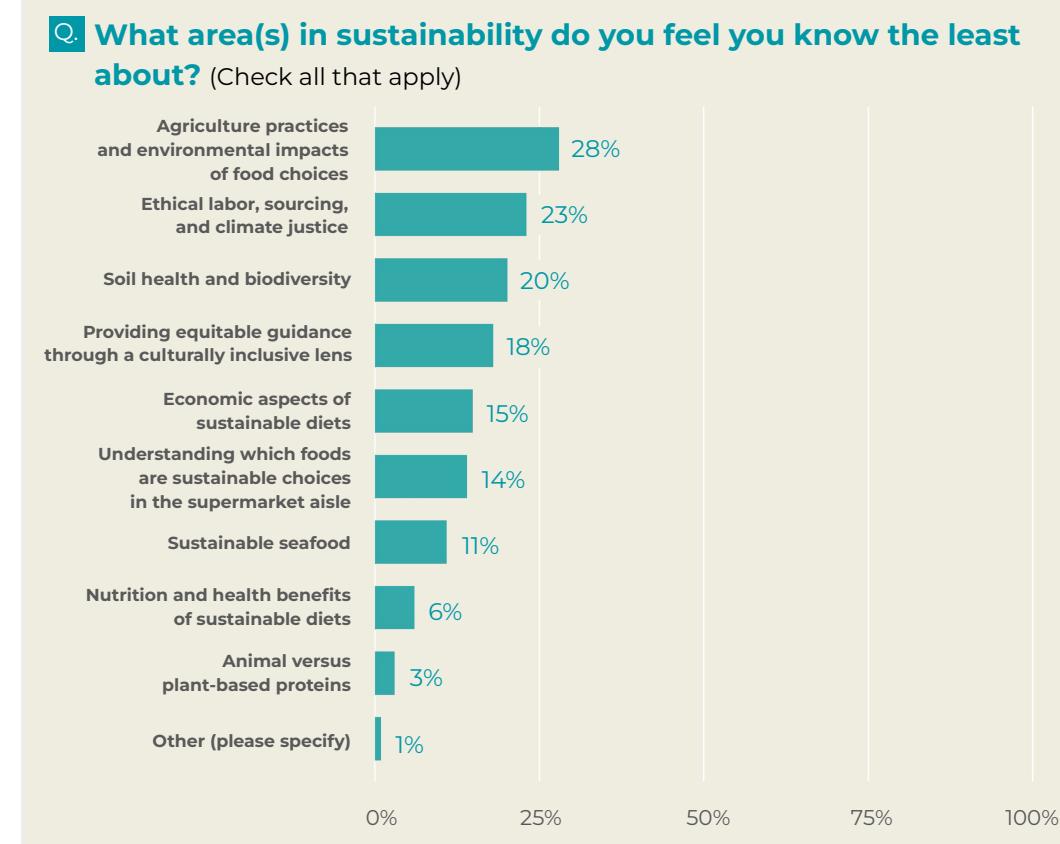


Over 9 in 10 RDs report barriers to advancing sustainability.

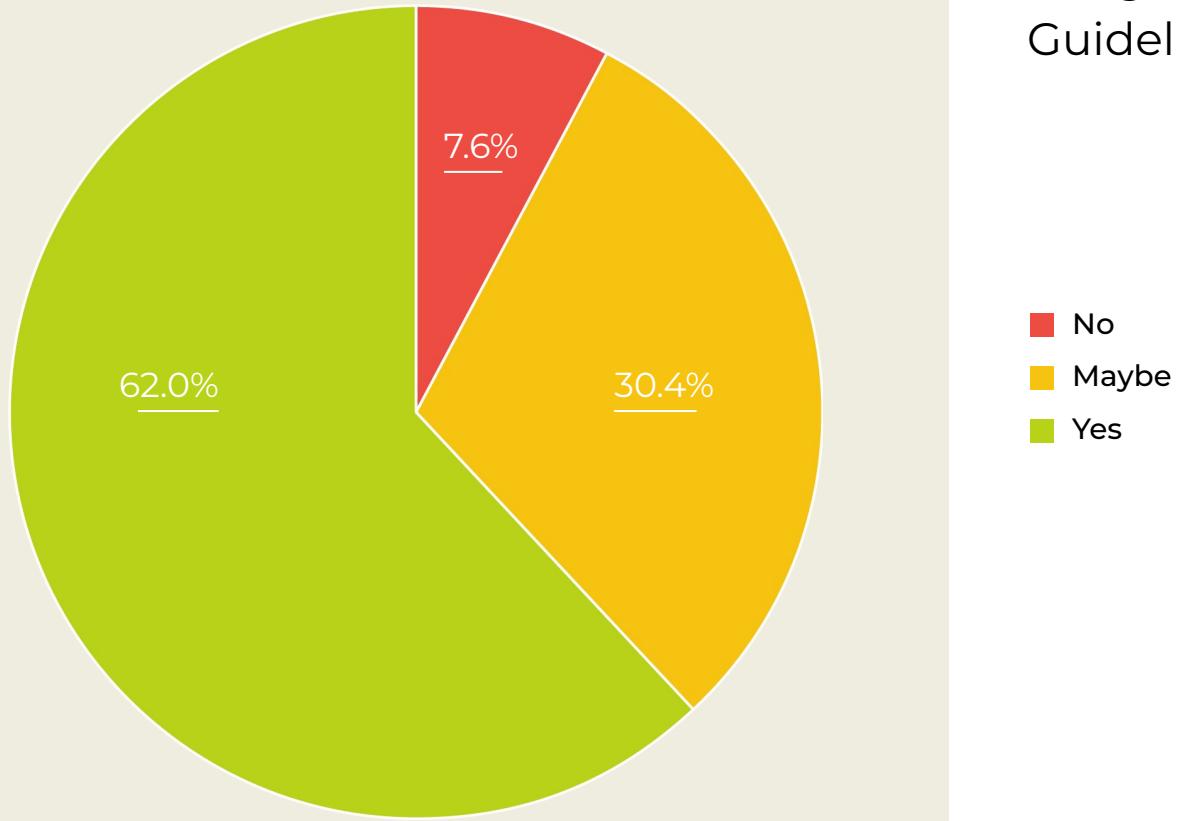
Almost all (98%) RDs report barriers to advancing sustainable food systems in their practice. The largest barriers cited were lack of: **access and affordability** (30%), **knowledge** (21%), and **tools and resources** (16%).



Among areas of sustainability, RDs have the least knowledge regarding agriculture practices and environmental impacts of food choices (28%), **ethical labor, sourcing, and climate justice** (23%), **soil health and biodiversity** (20%), and providing equitable guidance through a **culturally inclusive lens** (18%).



Q Do you believe sustainability science should be formally integrated into the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans?



Nearly two-thirds (**62%**) of RDs believe sustainability should be formally integrated into the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

- No
- Maybe
- Yes

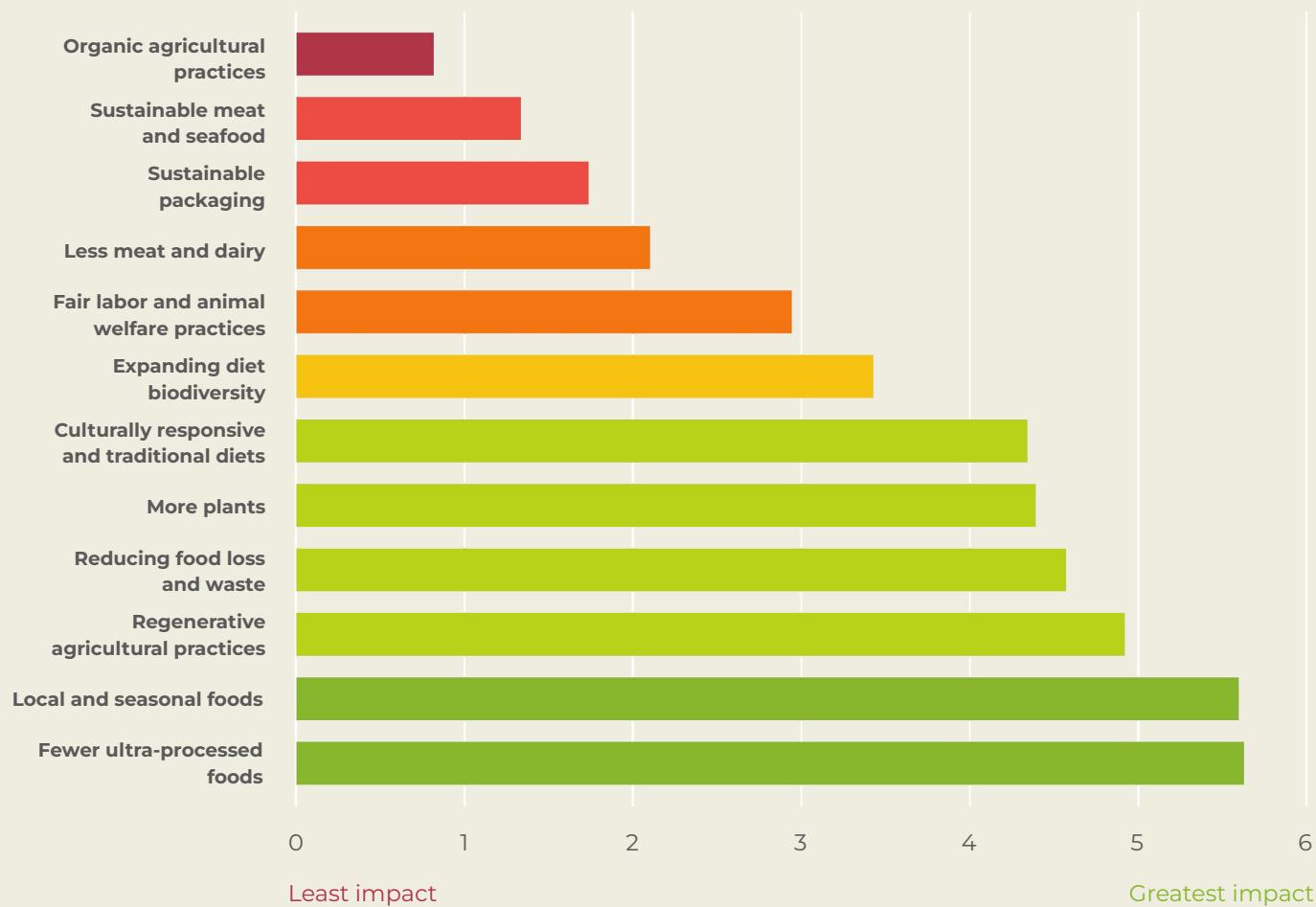
When guiding people towards factors that impact sustainable diets*, RDs ranked:

Having the greatest impact:
fewer ultra-processed foods, a focus on local/seasonal foods, and reducing food waste

Having the least impact:
regenerative or organic agriculture practices, and sustainable meat and seafood

*Adapted from sustainability domains in 13 leading national food based dietary guidelines that incorporate sustainability. Vogliano, C., Geagan, K., Chou, S., Palmer, S. (2021). Empowering Nutrition Professionals to Advance Sustainable Food Systems [White Paper]. Food and Planet.

Q. When guiding people toward sustainable diets, rank the following strategies in order of 1 - greatest impact to 12 - least impact.



PART 4

Conclusions

- Limitations
- Conclusion/Discussion
- Next Steps



Survey Limitations

Restrictive Question Wording

Some questions, especially those concerning field of practice, may have been too restrictive, leading to possible bias. This could lead to potential under-representation of diverse roles or contexts, distortion of the true distribution of responses, and inaccuracy of conclusions about the population under study. Different perceptions around terminology may have influenced how respondents chose to answer certain questions.

Incomplete Survey Responses

Not all questions were required, leading to uneven response rates. This variability can introduce biases, potentially affecting the study's conclusions due to the inability of capturing the full range of opinions or experiences. This can compromise the robustness of conclusions drawn from such incomplete data. To address this limitation, incomplete survey responses were removed from reported data.

Selection Constraint Issues Affecting a Significant Portion of Respondents

In some cases, technical issues prevented respondents from selecting multiple options, possibly obscuring genuine trends or patterns in the dataset.

Conclusions

1.

There is a major gap in sustainability education and knowledge in the field of nutrition.

These data clearly reveal significant barriers for dietitians to receive sustainability education within the field of nutrition. Despite a strong desire among RDs to be involved in sustainability, the majority face substantial barriers in doing so because of lack of knowledge and confidence in SFS.

2.

Professional sustainability education is currently limited in quality and scope.

Sustainability topic areas require a much more complex understanding than what the majority of RDs are exposed to in their education programs. In particular, RDs express less confidence around sociocultural and planetary factors. Current professional sustainability education has many limitations, including lack of quality and scope, and the presence of bias, such as industry-funded educational events.

3.

Opportunities for formal training need to be expanded.

A majority of RDs believe their clients are moderately to very interested in sustainability, and RDs who receive formal SFS training or education are significantly more likely to incorporate sustainability into their practices. This highlights a clear opportunity for integrating formal SFS training across the dietetic profession by including these topics in dietetic program curriculum and internships, advanced education, continuing education, and workplace education settings.

Conclusions

4.

Access and affordability are significant barriers for RDs to advance sustainability within their practice.

RDs rated lack of access and affordability as the top barrier to advancing SFS within their practice—at a higher rating than education or knowledge. These data highlight the need for innovation at the systems level (e.g., policy, retail, and healthcare), as well as creating opportunities to highlight success stories which demonstrate affordable, accessible SFS strategies in a variety of settings.

5.

Views of sustainability priorities differ from that of global emerging consensus areas.

These data suggest a disparity between how RDs in the US view the impact of sustainable diet practices compared to a review of 13 global food based dietary guidelines that incorporate sustainability.¹ This discrepancy presents an opportunity to explore the underlying factors behind this gap, such as lack of confidence and knowledge of agricultural practices, a greater familiarity with topics associated with dietetics education (e.g., food waste, ultra processed foods), the influence of industry sponsored education, or limitations in survey design.

6.

There is an urgent need to advocate for formal integration of SFS into the Dietary Guidelines.

A significant portion of RDs believe that sustainability science should be formally integrated into the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Many other countries include recommendations for sustainable diets in their food based dietary guidelines, offering a formal structure to support national food policy, as well as a framework for RDs to advance sustainable diets.

¹ Vogliano, C., Geagan, K., Chou, S., Palmer, S. (2021). *Empowering Nutrition Professionals to Advance Sustainable Food Systems [White Paper]*. Food and Planet. www.foodandplanet.org



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