

## BALANCED NUTRITION—FOR PEOPLE AND PLANTS


**The latest in food fashion is to reduce or eliminate carbohydrates from one's diet to lose weight.** Carbohydrates are bad, some say. Even fast food stores and my local supermarkets have joined the slam-the-carb brigade. It seems the whole world is belly-ing up to this new, easy on the conscience concept of eating. Throw the USDA food pyramid out the window and eat all the fats you want. The new wave of nutrition has arrived.

**What has happened to sensibility in eating...like taking in fewer calories than those burned to lose weight or balancing input and output to maintain an ideal weight?** There is no magic formula for staying slim and fit. Don't overeat! Before you start shaking your fist and yelling, let me tell you that I've been there. During my graduate school years, I was 65 lb heavier than today, exclusively because of my affinity for food—of any variety—and my aversion to exercise.

**I grew to dislike my overweight self, so set out to take control of my health before it was lost to a heart attack, stroke, or diabetes.** There was no Atkins Diet for me to follow, and that's good, because one wasn't needed. My plan: eat sensibly and develop a sustainable exercise program. The excess fat came off slowly but steadily.

**People can add to their quality of life simply by eating a balanced diet that includes a healthy variety of foods and food groups.** (After all, what would life be without baked potatoes, orange juice, and pizza?) The same principle applies to crops farmers grow. Feed them a balanced diet, and they will return the favor in measurably higher yields of better quality. Plants require up to 17 nutrients to complete a normal life cycle. More than that, those nutrients must be applied in balance with crop needs. Apply too much of one or not enough of another, and plant performance suffers. So do farmer profits.

**The best way to determine what is needed for balanced plant nutrition is to soil test.** Taking soil tests on a regular basis establishes crop needs for the current year, monitors changes in soil nutrient levels with time, and guides nutrient management program development to meet long-term crop needs while helping to protect the environment. For balanced plant nutrition, soil test before you invest in fertilizers. Your crops will thank you and so will your pocket book. While you're at it, eat right!



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