

Meat

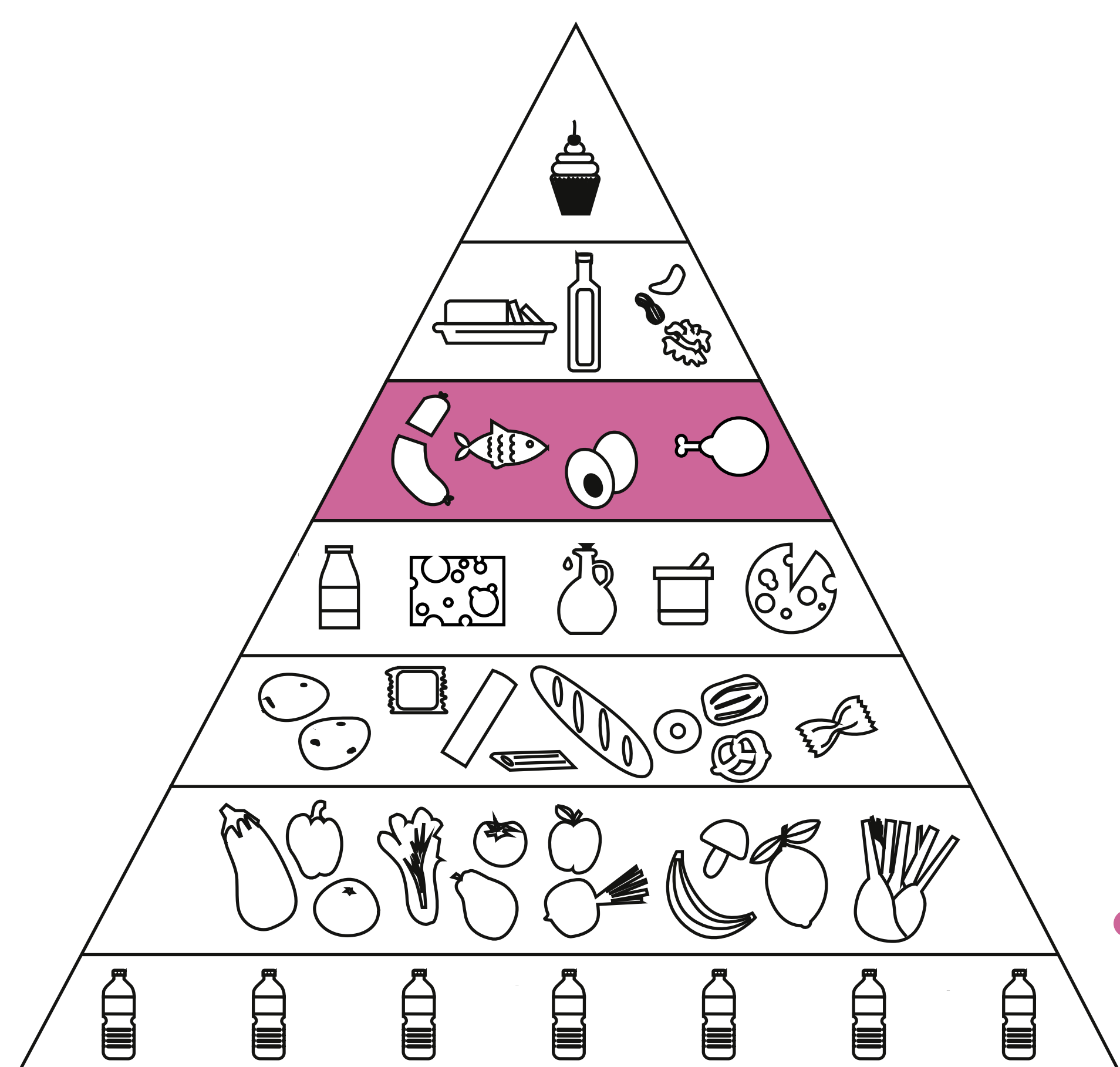
How it could taste better

Excessive meat consumption

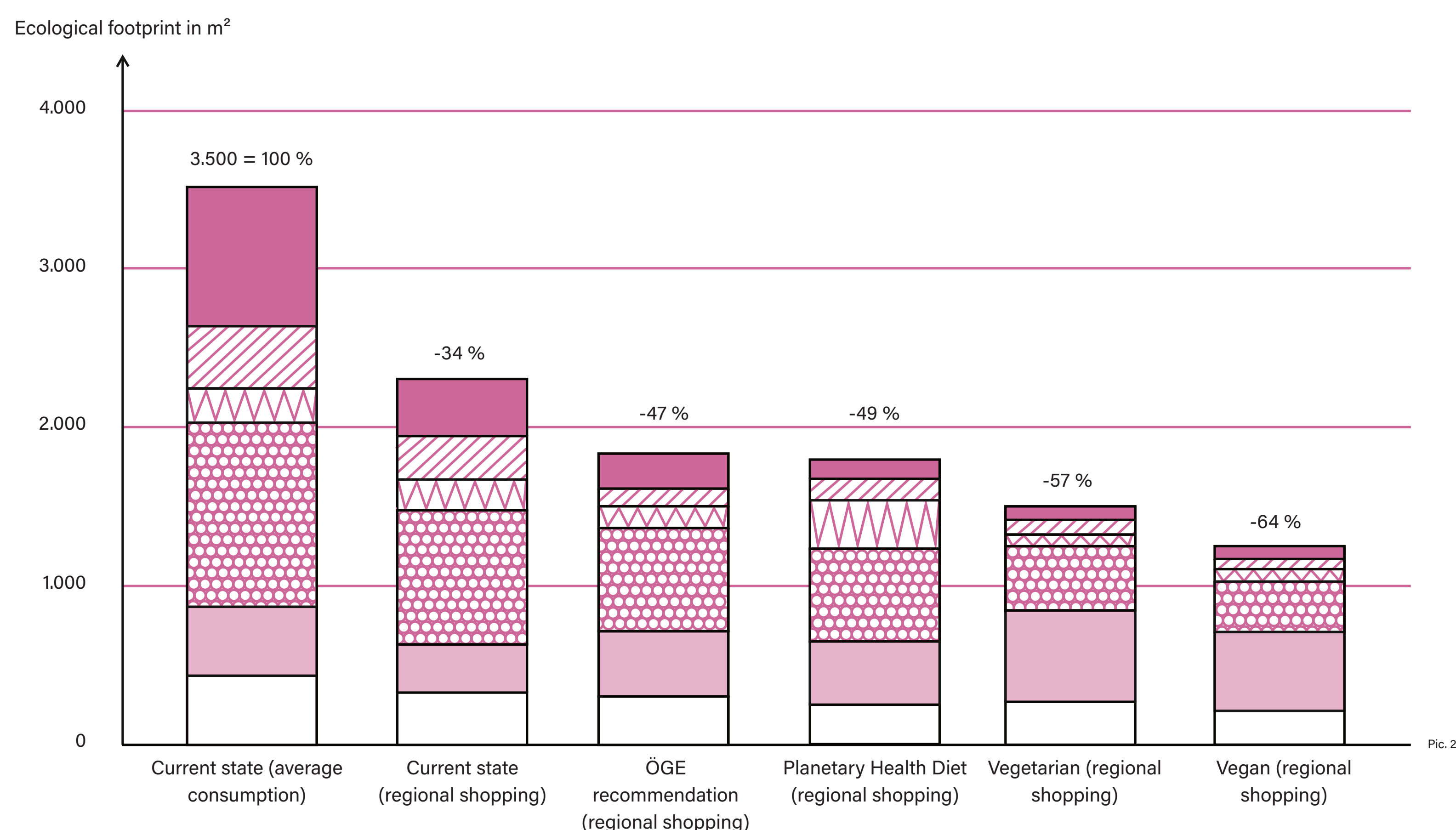
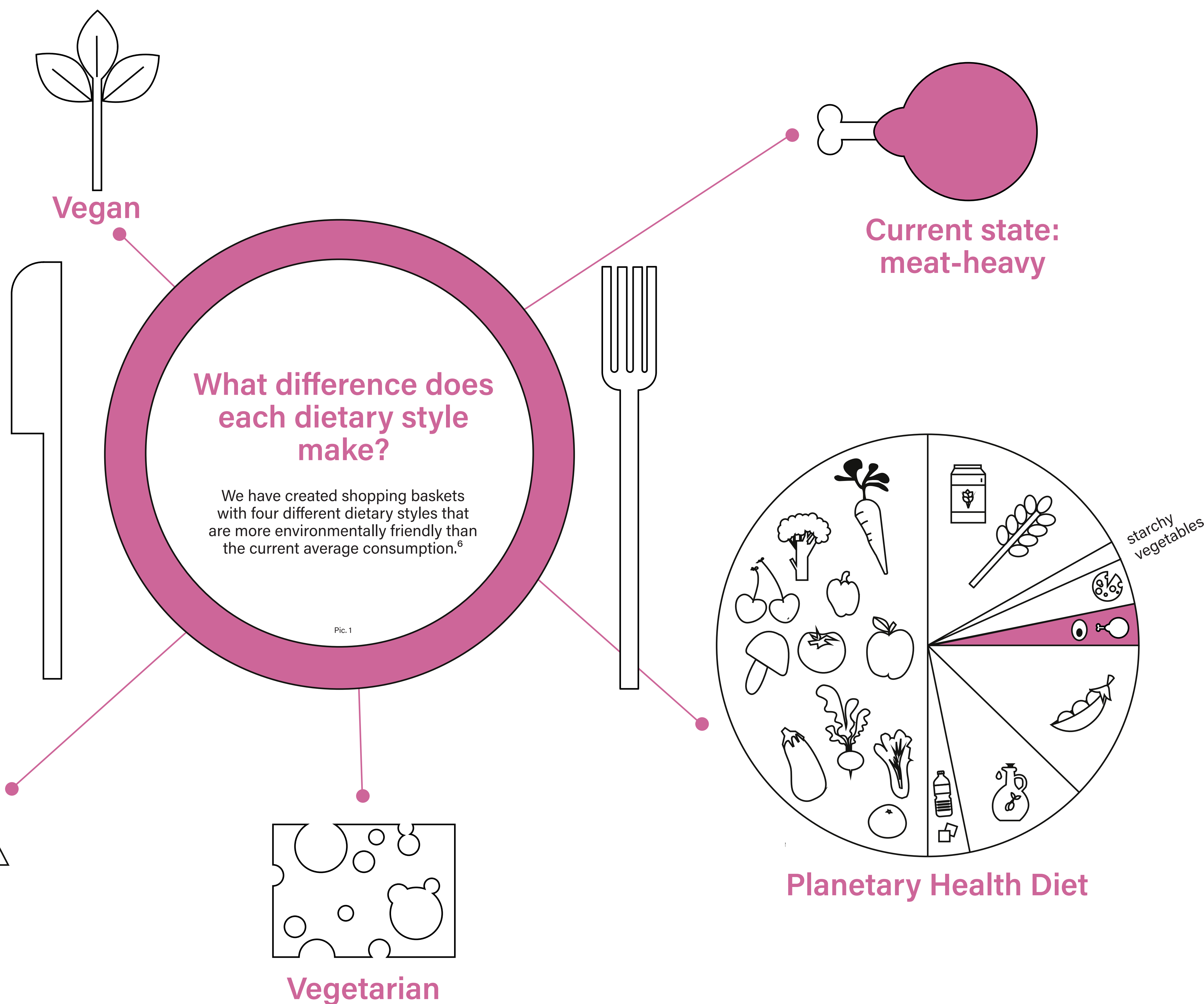
We consume almost 60 kg¹ of meat per person per year – excluding fish. This is not beneficial for our health, the environment, or the climate.

Approximately three-quarters of greenhouse gas emissions associated with food in Austria on average are attributed to the consumption of animal products. Nearly half of this is caused by meat consumption.²

More than 15% of all global greenhouse gas emissions are linked to the consumption of animal-based foods.³ Beef accounts for the highest emissions per kilogram of meat⁴ – mainly methane. However, the high consumption of chicken and pork in Austria also carries significant weight.⁵



Austrian Food Pyramid (ÖGE Recommendation)



What is the ecological footprint of different dietary styles?

The Austrian food pyramid recommends two-thirds less meat (around 20 kg per person per year).⁷

Only about one-fifth of the current meat consumption (10.5 kg per person per year) is sustainable for the planet: the Planetary Health Diet.⁸

Already 16% of Austrians follow a flexitarian diet.⁹ This means they eat less or less frequently meat. Those who completely avoid meat are vegetarians.

A vegan diet includes no animal products at all. It is essential to follow the so-called Giessen vegan nutrition pyramid to maintain a balanced and healthy diet.¹⁰

The ecological footprint calculates an area as a measure of environmental impact, expressed in m². The so-called Sustainable Process Index (SPI) evaluates land use, raw material basis (fossil, renewable, and non-renewable resources), emissions into the air, and inputs into water and soil.

These example shopping baskets consist mainly of products from regional sources, often available unpackaged at farmers' markets and originating from organic and small-scale farming. The composition of these baskets follows recommendations for a healthy and balanced diet. The current state (Ist-Zustand) is based on the current average consumption behavior.

In the current state, products often come from international sources, conventional and large-scale farming, and are usually purchased packaged from supermarkets, resulting in a significantly larger ecological footprint. The specified values for the ecological footprint refer to selected shopping baskets and may vary in actual purchases.

What can we do?

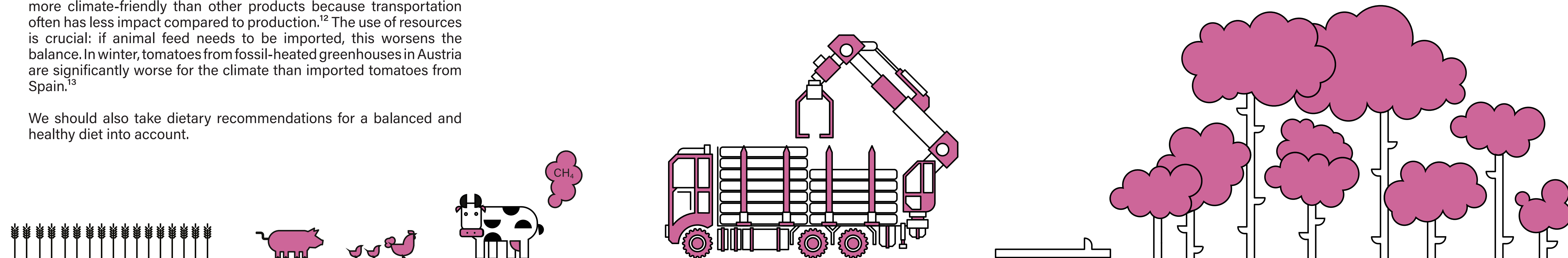
Reducing meat consumption is the best way to protect the climate through our diet. If we only ate meat from alpine pastures (3%), it would amount to 1.7 kilograms per person per year¹¹ – or at most one small Wiener schnitzel per month.

Furthermore, if regional, then ideally also seasonal and organic. Regional products, while offering economic benefits, are not inherently more climate-friendly than other products because transportation often has less impact compared to production.¹² The use of resources is crucial: if animal feed needs to be imported, this worsens the balance. In winter, tomatoes from fossil-heated greenhouses in Austria are significantly worse for the climate than imported tomatoes from Spain.¹³

We should also take dietary recommendations for a balanced and healthy diet into account.

Animal feed and the rainforest

Rainforests are being cleared for the cultivation of animal feed, which could lead to a tipping point that exacerbates the climate crisis.¹⁴ The Amazon rainforest could then emit more CO₂ overall than it absorbs.¹⁵ In the official (production-based) accounting, these greenhouse gas emissions are currently attributed to Brazil. Avoiding imported animal feed thus impacts the production of concentrated feed in South America.



¹ vgl. Statistik Austria, 2022b - für das Jahr 2021, ohne Fisch.
² vgl. mein-fussabdruck.at, 2023
³ vgl. FAO 2009 & FAO 2013b: 11
Lindenthal & Schlatter, 2020, S. 19

⁴ vgl. Reinhardt et al., 2020, S. 6, Lindenthal & Schlatter, 2020, S. 13, WWF Österreich, 2015, S. 15, 38
⁵ vgl. Lindenthal & Schlatter, 2020, S. 17, WWF Österreich, 2015, S. 35, eigene Berechnung anhand von Statistik Austria, 2022a, und Emissionsfaktoren-Quellen aus voriger Fußnote.

⁶ vgl. CFB, 2023, Daten direkt erhalten. Alle Warenkörbe beziehen sich auf Wochenrationen je Person und sind zur besseren Vergleichbarkeit auf 2.100 kcal/Tag/Person skaliert.

⁷ vgl. AGES, 2022
⁸ vgl. Willett et al., 2019, S. 451
⁹ vgl. Penker et al., 2022, S. 5f.
¹⁰ vgl. BKK ProViBa & Keller, o.J.
¹¹ vgl. Lindenthal & Schlatter, 2020, S. 16

¹² vgl. Penker et al., 2022, S. 4f.
¹³ vgl. Thüml et al., 2014, S. 597ff.
¹⁴ vgl. UBA, 2023a, S. 195
¹⁵ vgl. Lindenthal & Schlatter, 2020, S. 18

Pic. 1: Eigene Darstellung basierend auf AGES, 2023, und Willett et al., 2019, S. 451
Pic. 2: Eigene Darstellung basierend auf CFB, 2023, Daten direkt erhalten.