

For immediate release

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New Zealanders eating red meat within global report guidelines

New Zealanders are eating beef and lamb in moderate amounts within the guidelines outlined in the new World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) report published today.

The landmark WCRF report, 'Diet, nutrition, physical activity and the prevention of cancer: a global perspective' has been five years in the making and is the largest report of its kind, based on 7000 scientific studies of all shapes and sizes.

In contrast to the first report ten years ago, obesity and inactivity are now clear leaders when it comes to putting yourself at risk of cancer.

Otago University's Professor Jim Mann is a key member of the expert panel which compiled this report. He comments, "We have known for a long time that obesity is an important risk factor for cancer, but there is an overwhelming amount of additional new evidence. Obesity and lack of physical activity increase the risk of a whole range of cancers, including some of the commonest cancers we know. Reducing the incidence and prevalence of obesity is an absolutely critical factor in cancer risk reduction."

The first report put single foods, such as red meat, under the spotlight, but not today, according to Professor Mann. "Attempts to incriminate a single food are likely to lead to inappropriate diets, diets which will not necessarily protect against cancer. To the best of my knowledge, and to the best of anyone's knowledge, there is no evidence that moderate intakes of red meat cause any harm in terms of cancer, or indeed I might say, anything else I'm aware of. Indeed red meat is an excellent source of a whole range of nutrients."

Professor Lynn Ferguson, Head of Nutrition at the University of Auckland, also involved with the report, agrees with the balanced diet approach to reducing cancer risk, "I'm worried about any sort of diet that cuts out any major food group because there are so many different nutrients of various sorts."

With expert advice giving red meat the thumbs up, Rod Slater of the New Zealand Beef and Lamb Marketing Bureau welcomes the report.

“This report really reinforces the message that New Zealanders have been getting for a long; a healthy lifestyle with a good balanced diet.”

A balanced eating pattern, including a variety of fruit, vegetables and other foods high in fibre, combined with regular physical activity promoting a healthy body weight, offer the best protection against cancer.

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