

SO YOU'RE AN ENVIRONMENTALIST

WHY ARE YOU STILL EATING ANIMAL PRODUCTS?

In recent years awareness about global climate change and other environmental issues has increased considerably. Unfortunately, one of the greenest lifestyles out there has been kept relatively quiet. Switching to a plant-based diet will do more for the planet than changing lightbulbs and driving hybrids ever could.

According to Geophysicists Eshel and Martin from the University of Chicago, "where the environment is concerned, eating meat is like driving a huge SUV...Eating a vegetarian diet is like driving a mid-sized car. And eating a vegan diet (no dairy, no eggs) is like riding a bicycle or walking." Shifting away from SUV-style diets to much more energy-efficient alternatives, is key to fighting the global warming trend.¹



About 20 per cent of the world's population, or 1.4 billion people, could be fed with the grain and soybeans fed to U.S. cattle alone.⁷



A few other 'meaty' facts:

- In 2006 a UN report summarized the devastation caused by the meat industry as "one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems." Overall, animal agriculture creates 18% of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, and is the leading cause of methane emissions.² In comparison, the world's transportation industry produces 14% of the world's CO₂.
- An enormous amount of the world's already limited fresh water resources are consumed by farm animal production. A vegetarian diet requires only 300 gallons (1,135 litres) of water per day, while a meat-eating diet requires more than 4,000 gallons (15,141 litres) of water per day.^{3,4} Shockingly it takes 990 litres of water to produce just one litre of milk.⁵
- Vast tracts of land are needed to grow crops to feed the billions of animals that humans raise for food each year. Raising animals for food is grossly inefficient because while animals eat large quantities of grain, they produce only small amounts of meat, dairy products, and eggs in return.

Eating 1 lb. of meat emits the same amount of greenhouse gasses as driving an SUV for 40 miles.¹



Of course we need start developing alternative sources of power, better transportation systems, and stricter regulations against polluters. But as we're struggling and waiting for these and other structural changes, we can each make personal changes.

You save more water by not eating a pound of beef than you do by not showering for an entire year!⁶

If you already are vegan or vegetarian, power to you! If you're not, maybe it's time to consider it, or at least try it for a few days a week. Taking the animal-free plunge has never been easier or more essential than it is today. For more information, please see our Web site at www.ncva.ca.

Resources:

1 Eshel, G. and P. A. Martin, 2006: 'Diet, energy and global warming,' Earth Interactions, 10, 1-17.

<http://geosci.uchicago.edu/~gidon/papers/nutri/nutriEI.pdf>

2 H. Steinfeld et al., "Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options, Livestock," United Nations Environment and Development (2006).

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.htm>

3 Robbins, John. Diet for a New America, 1998, p. 367.

4 Frances Moore Lappé, Diet for a Small Planet, Ballantine Books: New York, 1982.

5 WSPA report "Eating our Future; the environmental impact of industrial animal agriculture."

6 Robbins, John. The Food Revolution, 2001, p. 236.

7 Mark Gold and Jonathon Porritt, "The Global Benefits of Eating Less Meat," 2004, p. 22.

<http://www.wellfedworld.org/PDF/CIWF%20Eat%20Less%20Meat.pdf>

