

Global Warming - Meat is the Prime Driver

Animal-based agriculture is a driving force behind most of the world's environmental problems. In fact, according to the highly-respected World Watch Institute:

"The human appetite for animal flesh is a driving force behind virtually every major category of environmental damage now threatening the human future - deforestation, soil erosion, fresh water scarcity, air and water pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, social injustice, the destabilization of communities, and the spread of disease."

Considering that we now raise 60 billion animals for food worldwide, over 8 times the human population, it would be surprising if this weren't the case.

Massive is the only word we can think of when it comes to the damage to the environment caused by raising livestock. Since one third of all the habitable land in the world is used for raising animals (or for growing crops to feed them), it's not surprising that the animal agriculture industry has such a massive impact on our environment.

Farm animals require huge amounts of feed, and the fertilizers and pesticides used to grow that feed require oil both as a raw material and energy source. Raising farm animals takes enormous quantities of fresh water, for drinking and for growing their feed, and fossil fuel to power all the equipment, transportation, refrigeration and freezing that raising and producing meat requires.

Clearing land for livestock or their feed also results in deforestation, especially in rainforests, releasing vast amounts of greenhouse gasses on the one hand while depriving the world of large amounts of carbon dioxide absorbing plant life on the other.

Global warming just may be the most serious environmental threat in human history. It's caused by the production of large quantities of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane. These gases trap heat in the earth's atmosphere and so contribute to the over-warming of the planet.

Many scientists are very concerned that this warming is causing the glaciers and the polar ice-caps to melt, which is gradually resulting in a rise in the sea-levels. Low lying lands are at risk of being permanently flooded, causing

many people to lose their homes and farm land.

In other parts of the world, changes in weather patterns causing droughts will occur resulting in famine. If the world continues to produce or increase global warming gases at the current rate, there will be an environmental catastrophe which could lead to the death of millions of people.

However, the environmental community is only just now beginning to recognize that raising meat is a prime driver of global warming. We are happy to report that even Vice President Al Gore, producer and author of *An Inconvenient Truth*, has finally gone vegan. People were beginning to wonder, since he had been ordering only vegan food at events. He had also spoken about reducing his meat consumption in light of livestock's impact on global warming several years ago, giving us a glimmer of hope. At that time he admitted:

"It's absolutely correct that the growing meat-intensity of diets around the world is one of the issues connected to this global crisis, not only because of the CO2 involved but also because of the water consumed in the process."

Consider the following facts. Livestock is responsible for 10% of all carbon dioxide emissions. Methane is 25 times as powerful as carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide is 310 times as powerful as carbon dioxide for their global warming potential. 40% of methane and 65% of nitrous oxide produced from all human activities are from livestock.

But now for the good news! Switching to a vegetarian diet reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 3,267 pounds per person per year.*

Not ready to go veg? According to University of Chicago geo-physicists G. Eshel and P. Martin, even just cutting back your consumption of meat by only 20% is equivalent to switching from a standard car to a hybrid. Small changes can make a big difference. In time you'll discover that countering the effects of global warming with vegetarian food is easy and delicious. In fact, preserving the environment never tasted so good!

* Source: *Earth Interactions Vol.10 2006 no.9 p15*

"However close you can be to a vegan diet and further from the average American diet, the better it is for the planet."

- G. Eshel and P. Martin
Geophysicists,
University of Chicago



"Livestock and their byproducts actually account for 51 percent of annual worldwide GHG [green house gas] emissions."

2009 World Watch Institute
Report



"Give up meat for one day initially, and decrease it from there. In terms of immediacy of action and the feasibility of bringing about reductions [in greenhouse gas emissions] in a short period of time, it clearly is the most attractive opportunity,"

Dr Rajendra Pachauri, chair of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize