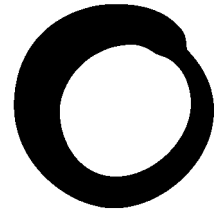


November 2009



**Friends of
the Earth**

Q & A

Eating the Planet? Feeding the world without trashing it

Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems, which make life better for people.

Friends of the Earth is:

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- the most extensive environmental network in the world, with almost one million supporters across five continents and over 60 national organisations worldwide**
- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in over 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.**

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What does Friends of the Earth and Compassion in World Farming's new research show?

'Eating the planet?' shows that we don't need to go veggie to feed a booming world population and save the planet from climate change and forest destruction – and can produce enough food for everyone without factory farming.

It shows that planet-friendly and humane farming can feed the world's 2050 population - forecast 9 billion – fairly, and shows that we can still eat meat up to 3 times a week.

How was the research carried out?

The research forecasts the options for feeding the predicted 2050 world population of 9 billion people by modelling future food production against different diets and ways of farming and using land. It considered three livestock systems - intensive, humane and organic - and four diets based on varying proportions of meat and dairy.

Each of the viable scenarios set out in the report does not eat into the rainforests – showing that we don't need to destroy forests to feed the world. In reality forests are being cleared at an alarming rate to make way for animal feed plantations and grazing land, and require urgent protection.

Why is producing meat intensively a problem for the planet?

Producing meat and dairy generates a fifth of the world's climate-changing gases – more than all of the world's transport - and eats into the planet's resources more than crop-based foods. It can take 10 kg of animal feed and 15,500 litres of water to produce 1 kg of meat in a factory farm.

People in the west eat 6 times as much meat as people in poor countries. Factory and industrial farming practices currently used to mass produce meat — is wiping out forests and wildlife which are cleared to grow animal feed, imported into Europe, and to graze cattle.

Feeding animals large amounts of grain which could be used to feed people is unfair and unsustainable. A more practical sustainable solution would be to farm animals on existing pasture, particularly in areas unsuitable for food production such as highland areas. Farming animals in this way also has climate benefits, helping to sequester carbon in the soil.

'Eating the planet?' shows that we can feed the planet without trashing it if we switch to planet friendly farming methods and eat less meat in our diets.

For more information about the environmental and social impacts of livestock production, see: www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/livestock_impacts_summary.pdf
www.ciwf.org/beyondfactoryfarming

How does a high meat and dairy diet impact on our health?

In the UK we eat three and a half times as much meat as is recommended by the World Health Organisation. Eating too much meat is associated with cancer, diabetes and obesity. Conversely, poorer countries eat very little and would benefit nutritionally from a fairer distribution of meat and dairy.

With as many obese as malnourished people in the world – roughly a billion of each - fairer and healthier lower-meat diets are a win-win for people and the planet, but changes to what we eat need to be accompanied by changes to farming for meat and dairy to play a part in our low-carbon future.

What are the animal welfare problems with current farming practices?

Currently, 60 billion animals are reared for meat globally, the majority of them in intensive systems where they are trapped in battery cages and overcrowded sheds. Factory-farmed poultry and pigs often never see daylight and can't behave as they would naturally, resulting in stress and frustration.

Factory-farmed animals are bred to grow fast and produce high yields, risking health disorders like lameness, infections such as mastitis and heart failure.

Doubling meat and milk production in the next 40 years – in line with current predictions – would subject billions more animals to the cruelty of factory farming.

What is planet-friendly and humane farming?

Planet-friendly farming such as small-scale mixed, extensive and organic systems reduce the need for imported crops and oil-based fertilisers and pesticides. These diverse systems also boost rural employment. Humane and free-range farming means that animals have space to roam. Both have environmental as well as animal welfare benefits. Organic farming builds up soil fertility and locks up carbon – helping the climate and local wildlife and also offers the highest animal welfare standards.

Extensive grazing systems reduce the need for imports of soy and other intensively produced grain, which are linked to deforestation.

Planet-friendly farming must be supported by planet-friendly distribution and trading which prioritises local, seasonal food that provides a fair income for farmers and good quality food for all. Locally-produced food means that animals are not subjected to inhumane long distance transport.

What sort of diet are you recommending?

The two lower meat diets (referred to in the research as 'less meat and fair' and 'less meat') have significant benefits as they are better for health, the environment and animal-welfare.

- Less meat: protects natural resources and provides human health benefits
- Fair, less meat: highly resource efficient, would guarantee sufficient food under all livestock systems, including organic.

The diet model that delivered the best deal for people, animals and the planet - the 'fair, less meat' diet - would mean less meat for rich countries and more for some poorer countries. This solution is consistent with healthy diet recommendations of no more than 90 g of meat per day. The diet would provide sufficient levels of energy, protein and fat with 20 per cent of protein coming from animal products, and some dairy every day.

The higher meat diets modelled in the research ('western high meat' and 'current trend' diets) – that are in line with global trends for increasing meat consumption – contain more calories, meat and dairy than is required or healthy, and so would lead to more obesity and health problems.

For more information on the other diet scenarios modelled in the report, see www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/eating_planet_report.pdf
www.ciwf.org/eatingtheplanet

What does the 'less meat' diet look like?

The less meat diet would allow an average person to eat meat two to three times a week as well as some dairy products every day. It delivers a nutritionally balanced, healthy diet.

How many calories does the 'fair, less meat' diet provide?

The 'fair less meat' diet assumes a fair and equal distribution of 2,800 calories per person per day - more than the UK recommended 2,000 – 2,500 daily calorie intake because the figure refers to supply to households, not intake per person, and so takes into account the fact that a proportion of food is wasted.

With a reduction in food waste and more fair food distribution and diets, this scenario would feed the world and allow for planet-friendly farming methods.

Why is this important for climate change?

Aiming for the lower meat diets means that we will have the best chance of feeding a growing population in the face of climate change. This is because these diets reduce pressure on land, vital in a future where temperature increases and extreme weather events could disrupt food supplies and reduce yields. Reducing meat and dairy in diets will also cut down on livestock's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. Globally, livestock production causes 18 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, more than the world's transport.

Are you proposing that people are made to eat less meat?

To begin the shift to planet friendly farming, 'Eating the planet?' calls on Governments in rich countries to measure and reduce the impact of producing and eating meat and dairy, and to promote the health and environmental benefits of a lower-meat diet. Individuals in the western world eating meat less often would enable people in poor countries to eat more meat and dairy, according to their dietary needs.

Will meat cost more in the future?

At the moment we all pay a hidden cost for the meat and dairy as UK taxpayers cough up more than £700 million each year to fatten up factory farming's profits through Government subsidies. Given the other hidden costs to our health and the health of the planet, the cheap meat on our supermarket shelves isn't such good value.

The switch to planet-friendly and humane farming may mean that we pay a bit more, but get better quality and tastier meat that has been produced humanely. We need to re-think our relationship with the food we eat and, instead of eating factory-farmed meat every day, see meat for what it really is – an energy and land-intensive treat.

Are diets more important than farming methods in minimising environmental impact?

To minimise the impact of our consumption we need to provide healthy and sufficient diets in the most efficient, resilient and planet-friendly ways possible. We need to switch to planet-friendly farming **and** eat less meat if we're to prevent planetary meltdown.

'Eating the planet?' shows that producing and consuming more meat and dairy and further intensifying farming will put massive pressure on land and resources, is likely to lead to an increase in climate-changing emissions and put increased pressure on valuable forests and other wildlife habitats – already being cleared at an alarming rate to grow animal feed and provide grazing.

Can we really change the way we farm – and is there any political support to do so?

Last year a major assessment of global agriculture was published (The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology - IAASTD) which showed that farming methods that link environmental, social and economic benefits should urgently be supported. The UN-sponsored assessment, carried out by 400 scientists, was supported by 58 governments, including the UK. It highlighted the environmental and social damage that intensive farming causes to soils, water use and greenhouse gas emissions, and urged scientific research to work with the traditional knowledge of farming communities to achieve sustainable farming solutions.

Don't we need GM crops to feed the world in future?

There is no evidence that GM crops will help meet future food needs. The IAASTD (see above), found that GM crops do not increase crop yields. All the GM crops grown commercially, mostly in North and South America, have reinforced an intensive system of agriculture, resulting in increased pesticide use and serious negative social impacts. The majority of these crops are used for animal feed, not food. The model of GM production is one that profits the companies, like Monsanto, who own the patents on seeds, and are unsuitable for, and unpopular with, small farmers around the world.

Is climate change going to affect the planet's ability to feed itself?

The impact of climate change on future food production is uncertain but 'Eating the planet?' shows that, even if climate change has a negative impact on crop yields, we can still feed everyone in the world with the 'fair, less meat' diet and humane and sustainable farming. Climate change should not be used as a justification for further intensification that will only worsen the vicious circle of environmental degradation and greater greenhouse gas emissions, as well as lead to more animals being reared in inhumane factory farms.

To protect the planet and prevent climate catastrophe, we need resilient, mixed and low-input farming systems that can comfortably feed the world on a lower-meat diet.