



**going veggie...**  
for the environment



Why going vegetarian for the environment is a positive choice



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There are many good reasons for going vegetarian. Over two million farm animals are slaughtered for food every day in the UK alone.

A balanced vegetarian diet includes all the nutrients you need to stay on top form and vegetarians have absolutely no trouble eating the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

## **But what about the environment?**

Studies estimate that a meat-based diet requires up to three times as many resources as a vegetarian diet and here are the reasons why.



# land use and sustainability

animals eat:



1/2 of the UK's wheat production



60% of the barley grown in the UK



90% of the world's soya harvest

The number of hungry people in the world is rising and, put simply, livestock farming is inefficient. Animals need to eat. In fact, they consume more than half the wheat and 60% of the barley grown in the UK and around 90% of the world's soya harvest.

They also need to breathe, move around, grow and reproduce and all of that uses up most of the energy and nutrition in the food they eat. Cattle consume around 7kg of grain for every 1kg of beef produced when they are slaughtered; pigs require 4kg for every 1kg of pork.

With 30% of the earth's entire land surface (70% of all agricultural land) used for rearing animals, this is no trivial consideration. Livestock production is responsible for 70% of the Amazon deforestation in Latin America, where the rainforest has been cleared to create new pastures.

Growing crops to feed people rather than animals uses less land, water and other resources. The amount of land needed to produce food for someone following a typical meat-based diet could feed two and half vegetarians, or five vegans.

# water, rivers and oceans



13,000 - 100,000  
litres of water



1 kilo of beef

Over a billion people across the world do not have access to clean water and two billion do not have proper sanitation. Farming accounts for around 70% of all freshwater taken from lakes, waterways and underground water supplies, much of it to produce meat. It takes around 1-2,000 litres of water to produce a kilo of wheat and somewhere between 13,000 litres and 100,000 litres for a kilo of beef.

At sea, over-fishing depletes the oceans, while fishing practices cause damage to both wildlife and the sea itself. Inland waterways run with manure, antibiotics and hormones washed in from the land and all sorts of pollutants from industrial fish farms. Looking at the facts in this booklet makes it easy to see why so many people choose a vegetarian diet to help reduce their impact on the environment.



# climate change

Greenhouse gases (GHGs) act like the glass of a greenhouse, trapping heat from the sun to warm up the earth. The idea of warmer summers seems attractive to us in the UK, but even a small change in the world's overall temperature has a devastating impact, changing the weather, raising sea levels and destroying natural environments.

We all need to do more to reduce GHG emissions and one of the most effective ways to change your own impact is to stop eating meat and cut down on dairy. Farmed animals produce enormous quantities of GHGs.



1/3 of methane generated by human activity is produced by cows and sheep



1 cow belches as much as 500 litres of methane per day

Methane, nitrous oxide are greenhouse gases

Nitrous oxide from cow manure damages the atmosphere



One high profile study even estimated that livestock farming is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than the world's entire transport system.

x25

methane has 25 times the global warming impact of carbon dioxide

x300

nitrous oxide is 300 times as damaging as carbon dioxide

nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide  
greenhouse gases

cow  
methane

Methane released into atmosphere caused by cows belching and passing wind

Less forest means more carbon dioxide

Human demand for meat

Cows need to eat, so land is cleared to grow feed. This leads to deforestation

# going veggie...

## more information

Find out more about the environmental damage caused by the meat industry at [www.vegsoc.org/environment](http://www.vegsoc.org/environment) or by ordering the Vegetarian Society's comprehensive guide 'Why it's Green to Go Vegetarian'.

Get all the support you need to change your diet for the better at [www.vegsoc.org/goingveggie](http://www.vegsoc.org/goingveggie) or by ordering a copy of 'Going Veggie', the Vegetarian Society's guide to going, and staying, vegetarian.

Both booklets, a wide range of recipes and all sorts of other information are available free of charge at:

[www.vegsoc.org](http://www.vegsoc.org)

Tel: 0161 925 2000

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References for the information in this booklet are available at [www.vegsoc.org/references](http://www.vegsoc.org/references)

