

Go on Vegan Diet for Pope Francis

By Sarah Withrow King

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Around the world, environmental advocates are rejoicing at reports that Pope Francis is expected to issue an encyclical on climate change and the environment as early as this spring. It's an important first step toward helping Catholics become better stewards of God's creation. But **anyone who wants to get serious about saving the planet and protecting its most vulnerable inhabitants from the deadly effects of climate change must make the switch to a vegan diet.**

- Raising animals for food is one of the largest sources of carbon dioxide emissions and the single largest source of methane and nitrous oxide emissions.
- These last two greenhouse gases are 25 and 300 times more potent, respectively, than carbon dioxide, and they are introduced into the Earth's atmosphere through animal waste.
- Environmentalists who urge people to buy a Prius but who still eat meat, eggs, and dairy products are barking up the wrong tree. It takes about 11 times as much fossil fuel to produce a calorie of animal protein as it does to produce a calorie of plant protein.
- In fact, a Worldwatch Institute report found that animal agriculture is the cause of more than half of global greenhouse-gas emissions.

Most scientists and leading policy analysts agree that a global shift away from the consumption of meat, eggs, and dairy products and toward the consumption of plant-based foods is vital to stemming the tide of greenhouse gases and adequately addressing the effects of climate change, including global hunger, preventable disease, deforestation, flooding, drought, loss of biodiversity, and deadly water pollution.

Currently, **30 percent of the Earth's landmass is used to raise animals for food**, including land used for grazing and growing feed crops. **When land is used in this manner, massive**



amounts of water and soil are lost, forests are destroyed, and animal waste from industrial farms pollutes and sickens surrounding communities.

It takes more than 15,000 liters of water per day to produce a meat-based diet, compared to just over 1,000 liters of water per day for a vegan one.

Think about all the energy-intensive steps required to get animals from the farm to the supermarket.

- Massive amounts of grain and soybeans are used to feed animals because it takes about 700 calories' worth of feed to produce just 100 calories' worth of beef.
- Animals raised for meat are transported from the farm to the slaughterhouse in fuel-burning trucks.
- It takes energy to turn grain into animal feed, energy to operate slaughterhouses, and more energy to transport meat to processing plants, grocery stores and restaurants.

Producing vegan foods requires a tiny fraction of the resources it takes to produce meat, eggs, dairy products.

One hectare of land can feed:

22 people per year by growing potatoes, or

19 people by growing rice, but just

1 person by raising cows, or

2 people by raising sheep.

[Source: World Health Organization]

In considering how to combat climate change, we must remember that more than a billion of our brothers and sisters around the globe don't get enough food to eat because the huge amounts of grain, soybeans and corn that they could be eating are instead being funneled to the animals we use for food.

Catholics should be appalled to learn that **two out of every five tons of grain produced in the world are used to feed farmed animals or fish destined for the dinner table, not humans.**

If people eat fewer animal-based foods, that change would free up massive quantities of grain and reduce the pressure on land and limited water supplies.

I hope we can all honor Pope Francis' dedication to the environment by choosing a healthy and humane vegan diet. We cannot continue to squander resources and needlessly kill animals for food, worsening the climate, and condemning our brothers and sisters around the globe to death by disease and disaster.

We can and must adopt a healthier, kinder and more sustainable way of life, simply by eating vegan.

Sarah Withrow King is the director of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta) and the US Christian outreach and engagement program, Jesus People for Animals. To get involved in Peta Asia's work in the Philippines or to request more information on vegan eating, visit PETAAsiaPacific.com.

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