



Human Health and Planet Health—Same Solution

Our battlefield is against the devastating role animal foods play in human health, global warming, and environmental damage. Those of us who eat a plant-food-based diet understand the problems and solutions. People still eating meat and dairy don't have a clue. [See the December 2006 McDougall Newsletter for the beginning of this story.](#)

An amazingly simple win-win opportunity stares us in the face: a global switch to a plant-food-based diet will solve the diseases of overnutrition and put a big dent in global warming with one U-turn—since the up-to-now insatiable appetite for foodstuffs made from livestock (cows, sheep, pigs, and chickens) are at the root of both disasters.

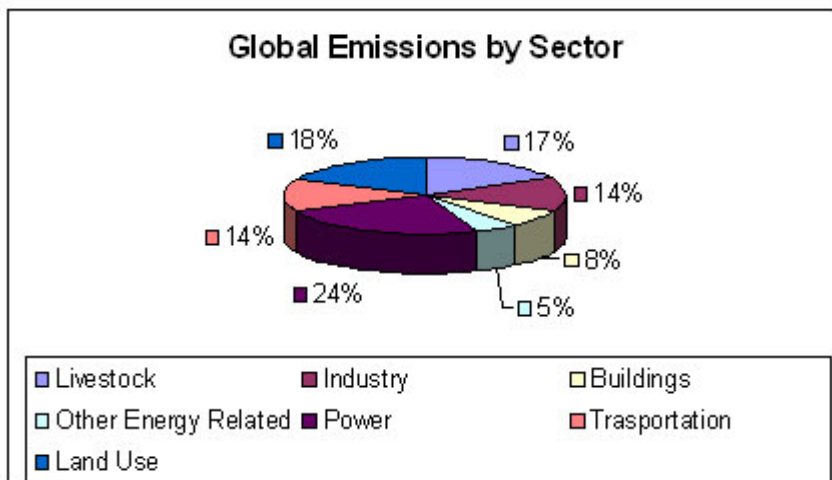
The human health crisis is pandemic with more than 1.1 billion people overweight and 312 million obese, 197 million have diabetes, and 1 billion have hypertension.¹ One final and fatal result of these three chronic conditions is 18 million people die of heart disease annually.*¹ You would think by now world leaders would have launched serious measures to reverse all this human suffering by attacking the primary cause—eating meat and dairy products.

Mounting levels of sickness march side by side with escalating environmental catastrophes: Extremes of weather are intensifying with droughts and severe flooding, many species of plants and animals are threatened with extinction, diseases are spreading, and crops are failing. Fatalists predict that our only salvation will be a radical reduction in the earth's present population of over 6.5 billion people by nuclear war or a viral pandemic. Let's hope our species is sufficiently advanced to reach less severe answers—like, for one, eating far less meat and dairy.

*All of this sickness fails to reduce population growth because these diseases kill only after the reproductive years—not only are children born, but deadly eating habits are passed on to the next generation.

Our Unique Perspective

The solutions will come from governments, businesses, local groups, and yes, individuals changing behaviors—people wanting to do the right thing. Worldwide, multidisciplinary efforts are being made to reduce the use of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas), out of control forest fires, and industrial wastes. The war on chronic diseases is being fought with strategies to reduce smoking, alcohol, illicit drugs, environmental chemicals, and infectious diseases (such as HIV). But almost nothing is being done to fix the food. That battlefield has been left to us who have already made the change—and know the enjoyment, practicality, and benefits of eating a low-fat, plant-food-based diet.



Have you ever talked to a cigarette smoker about their addiction? My 83-year old mother has smoked a pack a day throughout her adult life. She does not believe that the health messages on smoking apply

to her. When smoking was banned from restaurants she considered the action a personal attack on her liberties. Hotels that ban smoking are off limits for her. In other words, her habit blinds her from truth and responsibility. Fortunately, in our society 79% of people are non-smokers, who understand the importance of curbing this form of pollution. (By the way, in spite of some emphysema, my mother at 83 can run circles around people in their 20s, in part because she has eaten the McDougall diet for nearly 3 decades.)

The matters of eating meat and dairy products are complicated by the fact that only 3% of the population considers themselves vegetarians and most of these people still consume milk, cheese, and eggs.² This leaves you and me, about 1% of the population, who can clearly see the problems created by livestock for the environment—and the obvious solution. As the character played by Nicolas Cage in the film *National Treasure* said, "...if there is something wrong, those who have the ability to take action, have the responsibility to take action."

[Go to this website for a humorous perspective on our planetary responsibilities.](#)

The Real Solution Is Ignored

The 2006 United Nations report, [Livestock's Long Shadow –Environmental Issues and Options](#), concludes "Livestock have a substantial impact on the world's water, land and biodiversity resources and contribute significantly to climate change." Yet a search of this 407 page document reveals only 4 sentences with the word "vegetarian," and each sentence contains no meaningful discussion of this obvious answer. Search for the word "vegan" (a diet without animal foods) and you will find no responses.

Henning Steinfeld, Chief of Food and Agriculture Organization's Livestock Information and Policy Branch, and senior author of the UN livestock report said: "[Livestock are one of the most significant contributors to today's most serious environmental problems. Urgent action is required to remedy the situation...Encouraging the global population to become vegans is not a viable solution, however.](#)" Why not?

The solutions offered by this report are only half measures, such as improvements in grazing, manure, and water management; and a diet for cows, pigs, and sheep that reduces the toxicity of their burps, farts, and feces. Although this report's plans may seem politically correct—offending few people—the recommendations will have little impact on the environment. What are these people thinking?

Greed and Gluttony Are Still Winning

There is three-way, schizophrenic-thinking in the United Nations—one branch is promoting pollution and disease, while two others are fighting against both:

- ✓ The International Finance Corporation, the private equity arm of the World Bank (which is a specialized United Nations agency), is presently in the process of approval of a \$90 million loan to the Brazilian beef exporter Bertin to double production at its [Amazon forest](#)
- ✓ The World Bank also supported the founding works that led to the 2006 UN Report, *Live-stock's Long Shadow*.
- ✓ The World Health Organization, a major branch of the United Nations, is also well aware of the burden of human disease caused by livestock, and has concluded that in 2002, the leading chronic diseases caused 29 million deaths worldwide.³

Witness how incorrect information about "meat being necessary for protein" and "milk for calcium" persists even when solid scientific research clearly and consistently states the opposite. How often have you heard "I could never become a vegetarian; they look weak, pale, and sickly?"—and we all know better. Ignorance and greed have created an unprecedented health crisis and catastrophic damage to our environment—and change will not come easily because people don't like being told that their eating habits are destructive. In the background, trillions of dollars are invested in "staying the profitable course."



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.
Geophysicists Gidon Eshel and Pamela Martin

Yes, There will Be Sacrifice

Have you heard this boast, "I would rather die than give up my meat"? The present-day question is, how many people are there who are so self-centered that they will claim, "I would rather destroy Planet Earth, and the futures of all of the children who would have ever been born, than give up my beef"? I believe, faced with ominous catastrophe, and fully informed, most of us will decide that one more grilled cheeseburger is not worth suffering a heart attack, or covering half of Florida under six feet of water.

Which would you rather give-up? Your meat and dairy or...

The chance to drive a car anywhere ever again
 Taking a trip to visit relatives on an airplane forever
 Vacationing anywhere by bus, train, or airplane
 Watching television (even football games) ever again
 The chance to show your children wildlife in the forest
 The opportunity to swim with your children and fish on colorful coral reefs
 The good fortune to say, "Gorillas, panda or polar bears are not extinct."
 One-third of the world's land mass
 The rainforests of South America
 Security to live without being invaded by people who have lost their homes to flooding
 Living free of constipation? Heart failure? Diabetes? Cancer?
 The opportunity to live 10-healthy-years longer (Vegetarian 7th Day Adventists live 10-years longer than the average Californian⁴)
 Pleasant body odor (meat stinks)

Is giving up meat all that much of a hardship?

Actions to Be Taken

Some years back when I owned a big black Lincoln Navigator, a man approached my gas guzzling behemoth with a sign reading, "Stop Polluting." I heard the message. Now we all need to start carrying signs that say, "Stop Polluting with Your Meat and Dairy Habit." These words do not have to be on a cardboard placard, but should be in the forefront of your thoughts and be easily formed on your lips. Ultimately, meat- and dairy- eating must become vilified as "dirty, destructive habits," worse than cigarette smoking and public drunkenness—because they are.

Personal Activities to Put on Your Schedule:

- ✓ Forward the December 2006 and January 2007 McDougall newsletters to everyone—friends, family, and politicians.
- ✓ Write and talk to everyone you know. Talk about this subject in church, synagogue, and at any other religious fellowship—these people are like family. Bring this subject up at Rotary, Lions Club, and all other appropriate, and even, inappropriate meetings. Call talk radio shows, and write editorials for your newspaper. When the time comes, join protests in the street.
- ✓ Encourage everyone you know to consume healthy and non-polluting food. Go so far as to inform friends who follow environmentally-polluting weight loss programs, such as Atkins, South Beach, the Zone, Jenny Craig, and Weight Watchers. Even if these diets were effective in the long-term (and they are not), they all rely heavily on livestock for their meals.
- ✓ Stop listening to corporate lies. The food industry buys researchers who craft "scientific" reports (advertisements) published in nutrition and medical journals that damage your family's health. (See the article in this month's (January 2007) favorite five). [This unethical behavior is equivalent to ExxonMobil Corp. giving \\$16 million to 43 ideological groups between 1998 and 2005 in an effort to mislead the public by discrediting the science behind global warming.](#)
- ✓ Buy locally grown foods. Vote with your shopping dollar for grains, fruits and vegetables—even better buy products that are organic, "rainforest friendly," sustainable, and family-farmed. Plant a garden (and some trees).
- ✓ Begin cooking and health education classes in your communities, churches, and schools.
- ✓ Keep your focus—We will make a difference.

Ask Your Government to:

- ✓ Enact pollution, sewage, and/or pesticide taxes on livestock, seafood, and animal-feed businesses.
- ✓ Place a direct to consumer "disease tax" on foods: Add a dollar to each pound of beef, chicken, fish, and cheese, and to each gallon of milk. Spend this new revenue for education directed at disease prevention and treatment by using a healthy diet and lifestyle—and for programs that rejuvenate our environment.
- ✓ Stop dishonest advertising from the food, pharmaceutical, and polluting industries.
- ✓ Ban lobbyists and "earmarks" favoring polluting, pharmaceutical, and unhealthy food industries.
- ✓ Provide money for public education on proper human nutrition through TV, radio, newspapers, and documentaries.
- ✓ Serve plant-food centered diets in schools and government institutions, including the military—53.9% of the US military personnel over the age of 20 are overweight.
- ✓ Stop grain and livestock subsidies, which have helped large agribusiness, not the small farmer, and have made sickening foodstuffs affordable for everyone.
- ✓ Change government subsidy programs for the poor to encourage consumption of plant foods. Restrict food stamps to healthy items only—no more colas, cheddar cheese, or chuck roast.
- ✓ Enact laws to reduce lands available for use of livestock.
- ✓ Enact laws to preserve our natural resources.
- ✓ Enact tax breaks for those who provide plant foods to consumers.
- ✓ Require hospitals to stop serving the very foods that brought the patients there in the first place. (Not too long ago cigarettes were sold in hospital gift shops—that's finally stopped—today McDonald's sell sickness in hospitals.)
- ✓ Require foods to be properly labeled with health risks. For example, cheese should be sold with this statement: "Warning from the Surgeon General: "This Food is Known to Damage Your Arteries Causing Strokes and Heart Attacks."
- ✓ Add environmental labels to meat and dairy: "Cattle Pollute Lakes, Rivers, and the Ocean."
- ✓ Offer financial incentives for students who choose a "green career," working to improve the environment.
- ✓ Promote lifestyle medicine. Offer financial incentives for young doctors to choose general practice based on treatment with a plant-food-based diet, physical activity, and clean habits.
- ✓ Require all drug and surgical treatments to be directly compared—and shown equal or superior—to treatments with a plant-food-based diet and proper lifestyle before being approved for use.

Any changes that can be made in the right direction are worthwhile—like with our personal health, the more we can replace animal foods with plant foods the better off Planet Earth will be—this is not an all or nothing approach.

Shifting the Wealth

Many people believe saving our environment is too difficult and will be too expensive. A report by economist Sir Nicholas Stern suggests that global warming could shrink the global economy by 20%. [But taking action now would cost just 1% of global gross domestic product.](#) The financial burdens from

diseases of overnutrition threaten the world's largest economies; most notably the USA and countries of Western Europe—even China now has twice as many overweight people as it did in 1991.⁴ In truth, giving up eating animals is a fundamental step necessary to avoid economic collapse from the burdens of disease and environmental disasters.

While appearing on a talk radio show one evening I received a call from a distraught dairy farmer. "Dr. McDougall, you are destroying my family with your claims about the dangers of drinking milk. I have children to feed and to put through school, and you may make that impossible." I told him I was sorry for his predicament, and then asked him, "What if you were a tobacco farmer?—should I not tell people the killing-truth about tobacco so your family prospers?" People in the business of destroying lives and the planet must find new work.

Innovations that result in plant-food-based eating practices will cause new people to rise to power and new fortunes to be made. Many will be displaced: cardiologists, bypass surgeons, oncologists, diabetes specialists can use their doctor skills for fighting malaria and other infectious diseases in Africa. People who now make their living from beef and dairy farms, slaughter houses, and processing plants will find cleaner work in grain- and vegetable-based agriculture. Family farms will return as corporate agribusiness disappears. A few cattle barons may be left destitute, but the rest of us will be much better off economically—enjoying excellent health on a habitable planet.

References:

- 1) [Hossain P, Kavar B, El Nahas M](#). Obesity and diabetes in the developing world--a growing challenge. *N Engl J Med*. 2007 Jan 18;356(3):213-5.
- 2) Only 3% are vegetarians: (<http://www.vsc.org/1103-How-Many-Veggies.htm>).
- 3) [Yach D, Hawkes C, Gould CL, Hofman KJ](#). The global burden of chronic diseases: overcoming impediments to prevention and control. *JAMA*. 2004 Jun 2;291(21):2616-22.
- 4) Fraser G. Ten years of life. Is it a matter of chance? *Arch Intern Med* 161:1645-52, 2001.
- 5) [Dobson R](#). China may have twice as many overweight people as in 1991. *BMJ*. 2007 Jan 27;334(7586):173.