

Vegetarianism

Saving the Planet a Bite at a Time

by Jana Hayes



If a green living makeover is on your calendar in the near future, you may be looking at all the energy saving technologies and materials on the market. Perhaps you are considering an Energy Star refrigerator, which uses 20% less energy than a standard model. Great! But as you shop, consider how the contents inside the refrigerator can have an even greater impact on reducing your carbon footprint and conserving natural resources.

Consider this... Producing one pound of beef causes emissions equivalent of 36.4 pounds of carbon dioxide, as much as driving a small car 140 miles, and uses enough energy to light a 100-watt bulb for nearly a month, according to studies by Japanese researcher Akifumi Ogino. Speaking at

a Paris press conference earlier this year, Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, head of the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) asked the world to "Please eat less meat – meat is a very carbon intensive commodity."

The environmental impact of eating meat is not limited to greenhouse gas emissions. John Robbins, author of *The Food Revolution: How Your Diet Can Help Save Your Life and Our World*, notes that to conserve water, many of us have replaced our 3-gallon-per-minute shower heads with 2-gallon-per-minute low-flow models. A daily 7 minute shower under a low-flow showerhead can result in saving almost 2,500 gallons of water per year. The production of just one pound of beef requires between 2,500 and 5,200 gallons of water, so by giving up just one pound of beef a year, you could save at least as much water as you would have saved in a year's worth of showers.

According to Cornell researchers

David and Marcia Pimentel, a meat-based diet requires more energy, land, and water resources than one based on plants. A 2006 United Nations report, entitled *Livestock's Long Shadow*, concludes that the meat industry is "one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global." This report concludes that raising livestock contributes, in addition to global warming, to deforestation, acid rain, ocean dead zones, land degradation, water pollution, and species extinction.

So while you're out there researching solar collectors and Energy Star windows, consider the words of Albert Einstein, "Nothing will benefit human health and increase the chances of survival of life on earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet." We can make compassionate choices that are delicious, improve our health, and establish a sustainable lifestyle that will preserve our planet for generations to come.

Jana Hayes has a Masters degree in Engineering Management with a concentration in Environmental and Energy Management. She and her husband are vegetarians and host weekly gatherings focused on personal transformation through meditation and ethical living. See Thursday's Ongoing Calendar.

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