World Environment Day: 3 reasons why going vegan can save the planet

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NEWS RELEASE

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While most people are aware of the role of transport in damaging the environment, far fewer understand the scale of the effect of the livestock industry which, according to the UN, generates more greenhouse gases than all transport combined. In a lifetime, the average Briton eats 11,000 animals, each requiring vast amounts of land, fuel, food and water.

World meat production has quadrupled since 1960 and the UN, on current trends, predicts that it could double again by 2050. According to UK think tank Chatham House, dairy consumption is set to rise by 75%, with China alone expected to be eating 20 million tonnes more meat and dairy per year.

The carbon savings from not eating meat speak for themselves: If everyone in the UK abstained from eating meat for one day per week more greenhouse gas emissions would be saved than by taking 5 million cars off the road; abstaining from eating meat seven days a week would more than halve the emissions of all greenhouse gasses from the domestic sector, the same as eliminating all greenhouse gas emissions from 12.5 million households in the UK.

"The single best thing any individual can do to reduce their carbon footprint is to go vegan," said Jasmijn de Boo, CEO of The Vegan Society. On the UN's World Environment Day, here are three key reasons why.

1.Climate change

Global warming poses one of the most serious threats to our environment. Methods of calculating vary and figures are disputed, most studies attribute up to 35 per cent of all global greenhouse gas emissions to agriculture. The UN has also said that "dietary change is essential if global warming is not to exceed [its target of] 2C."

2.Deforestation

For decades rainforests have been cut down to graze cattle and grow soya, the world's major crop for chicken feed. At the current rate of depletion, National Geographic believes that within the next 100 years rainforests could cease to exist. According to the Wageningen University and Research Centre, agriculture is the direct driver for around 80% of deforestation worldwide, also contributing to species extinction.

3.Water

Raising animals for meat requires huge quantities of water. Almost 40% of the world's fresh water is used on 85 billion animals, not including the vast amount of water used to grow crops to feed them. Although statistics vary, it is safe to say that it takes at least three times more water to feed a meat eater than required for a vegan.

There are many other reasons to go vegan to save the environment including pollution reduction, preserving land space, and saving the oceans and the air. You can try going vegan in 30 days with The Vegan Society's 30-Day Vegan Pledge www.vegansociety.com/pledge to receive emails of advice, information and delicious recipes to try out.

Sources

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The Vegan Society is a registered educational charity (no. 279228) that provides information and guidance on various aspects of veganism, including to new and potential vegans, caterers, healthcare professionals, educators and the media. Visit www.vegansociety.com for more information.

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