



# SAVE OUR FUTURE

*Beloved Earth Community of Riverside Church*

## In This Issue

### A Look at a Plant-based Diet for the Planet



As stewards of the Earth, this realm of miracle life and prosperity granted us by our Creator, we have a special responsibility to move beyond merely noting the devastation from the horrific effects of an unrelenting dependency on fossil fuel and its ongoing investors. We need to look for ways to reduce our own carbon footprint. While our individual actions cannot target the level of substantive and fundamental change needed to address the apocalyptic damage to our earth. By looking at things like the entirety of our diet and its impact and relation to climate change, we can opt to make a difference.



## A Letter from a UCC Minister on the Climate Crisis and a Meatless Diet

### What Does Our Meat-based Diet Do to the Earth

A recent article by Rev. Dr. Deborah DeMars Conrad, Pastor at Parkview UCC (CO) asks us to consider "Creation Justice and Animal Consumption." Quoting from studies from the *Stanford University Environmental Law Journal* and a study by Oxford University, she explains:

"If we are serious about environmental justice, we need conversations about the animal industry" because "some degree of farming animals for consumptions causes," as she quotes, "Climate change. Ocean dead zones. Fisheries depletion. Species extinction. Deforestation. World hunger. Food safety. Heart disease. Obesity. Diabetes. The list goes on." Further, the UN identifies plant-based diets "as a major opportunity for mitigating and adapting to climate change," and it recommends that governments around the world adopt policies to reduce meat consumption in their countries and region.

**Specifically, what are the problems with our current level of meat consumption and how does changing our diet address climate change?**

(1) **WATER:** The consensus is that in raising animals for consumption we add to the growing global water crisis, since animal agriculture is "the number one consumer of fresh water... (as it) takes roughly 5,000 gallons of water to produce 1lb. of beef." By contrast, "If everyone went vegetarian just for one day, the U.S. would save ... 100 billion gallons of water, enough to supply all the homes in New England for almost 4 months."

(2) **GREENHOUSE GASES:** Every step of the production process for animal products like beef and dairy generates greenhouse gases: from the clearing of forests for animal pasture, to producing millions of tons of animal feed, to the immense waste generated by cows, pigs, chickens, and other farm animals. Oxford University's study identified going vegan as the "single biggest way" we can reduce our carbon footprint, shrinking it up to 73%. Why? As lead author Joseph Poore, explains: "Converting grass into (meat) is like converting coal to energy. It comes with an immense cost in emissions."

(3) **METHANE:** A gas 80 times more potent at trapping heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, methane accounts for up to 30% of global warming since pre-industrial times. Some reports (<https://awellfedworld.org/world-watch-magazine/>) claim that up to 52% of human-caused methane emissions come from animal agriculture, with 32% of that coming from livestock digestion and waste.

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## What Does Our Meat-based Diet Do to the Earth (cont.)

(4) **NITRIDE OXIDE:** While not the biggest or most well-known greenhouse gas, it is dangerously potent, and since 1980, plant and animal agriculture has been responsible for almost two-thirds of human-caused nitrous oxide emissions, with animal waste a huge culprit.

(5) **ENERGY:** Our food system relies on energy from fossil fuels to grow, prepare, and transport food. It takes about 31.5 kilowatt-hours of energy to produce one pound of beef— a little under the amount of energy your fridge uses to run for a whole month.

(6) **OCEANS:** The nitrogen and phosphorus in animal waste can make their way into our oceans and chemically react with the water to create “dead zones”—areas where oxygen levels are too low for anything but algae to survive. The global meat industry—including the multi-billion dollar fishing industry—pollutes and destabilizes our oceans.

(7) **DEFORESTATION:** Animal agriculture—specifically cattle ranching—is responsible for a vast majority of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, the world’s largest tropical forest. Over a fifteen year period, the meat industry slashed and burned over 111 million acres of forests, the equivalent of 84 million football fields.

(8) **SPECIES EXTINCTION:** Deforestation for pastoral lands takes away habitat for the thousands of species who call forests home, forcing their populations to slowly die out, sometimes to the point of extinction. An estimated 135 different species of plants, animals, and insects are driven to extinction every day.

(9) **SOIL DEGRADATION:** Widespread deforestation for cattle-grazing and feed production erodes nutrient-rich top soil, making the soil unsuitable for plants to grow. At the same time, farmers who grow corn and soy for animal feed often over-cultivate soil in order to produce large yields cheaply.

(10) **UNDERNOURISHMENT AND FOOD INSECURITY:** Within our current food system, 8.9% of the world’s population (690 million) suffers from undernourishment and food insecurity. Since soil degradation and climate change may further disrupt global food production, more people may lose access to the healthy food they need to survive.

(11) **SPREAD OF DISEASE:** By suppressing the spread of disease in the short-term by pumping animals with antibiotics, the meat industry contributes to the growing threat of antibiotic resistance—the development of drug-resistant “superbugs” that can spread rapidly and endanger public health. If antibiotic use continues at its current rate, the UN warns that “antimicrobial resistant infections may become the leading cause of death globally by 2050.”

Excerpted from:

[https://www.ucc.org/pollinator\\_creation\\_justice\\_and\\_animal\\_consumption/EATING](https://www.ucc.org/pollinator_creation_justice_and_animal_consumption/EATING) and <https://thehumaneleague.org/article/environmental-benefits-of-veganism>



### ACTION STEPS TO TRY A PLANT-BASED DIET

1. Go slow: Take simple, manageable steps like eating meatless one day a week.
2. Focus on what you can eat, not what you can't and experiment and find products you like.
3. Embrace new "vegan" foods like tempeh, tofu, dairy-free milk, nut-based cheeses, fermented foods (kimchi, sauerkraut)
4. Try new restaurants. Find places on the Happy Cow's website <https://www.happycow.net>
5. Don't just eat junk, but focus instead on whole foods like fruits, veggies, beans, nuts and grains.
6. Get organized, plan meals, and always shop on a full stomach.
7. Learn a few reliable recipes.

Check if you need vitamins/supplements, find support by making diet changes along with someone else, and don't get discouraged.

### SIMPLE RECIPES

- <https://www.forksoverknives.com/recipes/vegan-burgers-wraps/five-ingredient-veggie-burger/>
- <https://minimalistbaker.com/smoky-bbq-black-bean-burger/#wprm-recipe-container-34154>
- <https://minimalistbaker.com/how-to-make-almond-milk/>
- <https://simple-veganista.com/vegan-potato-salad/#tasty-recipes-20718-jump-target>

**NOTE:** While the Beloved Earth Community is not formally a vegan organization, and includes people of diverse dietary preferences, we increasingly recognize the value of a vegan lifestyle for human health, animal welfare, and saving the planet.

## Beloved Earth Community

We call Riversiders to protest the climate crisis and care for the Earth through educational programs, greening the church, changing our lifestyles, and taking courageous political actions.

For more information, or to join, contact

David King <[davidking1089@gmail.com](mailto:davidking1089@gmail.com)> or

Claudia Canasto <[canastoclachi@gmail.com](mailto:canastoclachi@gmail.com)>

### Coming up...

- The Riverside Book Club's June Book is *The Spirit of Soul Food* by Reverend Dr. Christopher Carter. <http://www.trcnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/bookclub-list-revised-11.20221.pdf>
- Next Beloved Earth Meeting: Saturday, June 4 at 1:00pm
- To view this issue online, visit [www.trcnyc.org/belovedearthnewsletter](http://www.trcnyc.org/belovedearthnewsletter)

Contributors to this issue: Frances Connell and Mary Pasquini | Logo, Geofix © Jeremiah Drake