

Human Diets- Polluting the Environment and Threatening Animal Existence

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SUMMARY

Given that the global food systems are unsustainable, it is essential that we reevaluate what we consume and how food is produced, working wisely and effectively to discover answers. With the food on our plates, we can "manage" climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and significant shifts in land and water usage, ensuring that food production systems do not overtax our ecosystem. The world spends almost \$1 million each minute subsidising current food systems, which harms both human and environmental health and distorts markets. Governments and politicians should prioritise decreasing food loss and waste and push for a shift to sustainable agriculture in their climate change action plans. Be clear about the agricultural practises, ingredients, and nutritional values from producers, retailers, and services.

INTRODUCTION

Food is of course fundamental to life. In an ironic twist, some of the biggest risks to humanity's existence are being fed by the foods we eat. A rising body of research shows that our industrialised food production systems are a source of pollution, a factor in climate change, and a reason for the decline in biodiversity. The United Nations refers to these three factors as the "nexus" of sustainable development. The need for all three has increased as the world's population and income have increased. In addition to seeing a growth in demand, all three are now more important than ever because they are all necessary for producing food, may be utilised as sources of energy, and can be obtained via agriculture and water power. In a vicious cycle where more food is produced to meet demand, excessive consumption and food waste go hand in hand. Globally, dietary choices are changing in ways that are bad for the environment and for people's health. The highest increases in illness risk are continuously linked to red meat, both unprocessed and processed, which has the most detrimental effects on the environment. Therefore, even if processed foods heavy in sugar are bad for your health but have little to no negative effects on the environment, changing your diet to include more healthy foods will increase environmental sustainability overall.

What effect does our diet have on the environment?

Are we destroying the environment, or is it destroying us? When we study what we eat and how it is produced, we find abundant evidence of harm to both our environment (caused by the toxicity of industrial food production) and our food (caused by pollution and soil depletion). American agriculture policy has concentrated on supplying vast quantities of cheap calories over the past 30 years because Americans prefer inexpensive food. The federal government has long provided subsidies for corn and soy, two of the cheapest sources of calories that contribute significantly to our current calorie consumption (typically in the form of high fructose corn syrup or soybean oil). Additionally, a significant portion of the meals of the animals we consume. Due to its ability to be effectively farmed on massive fields, maize and soy are highly valued. Monoculture, on the other hand, necessitates farmers to use more pesticides and fertilisers and depletes the soil. The impacts of pesticides and fertilisers on the environment, animals, and our water supply are well known. While there is a vast variety of food served in restaurants in cities throughout the world, the real food that people eat is getting more homogenised. The primary negative consequences of agriculture are greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, desertification, harm to coastal reefs, extinction of species, and pollution. Eutrophication (nutrient excess) and dead zones in aquatic bodies are further effects of food production. The connection between food production (i.e., the human diet) and environmental health is explicitly hinted at in this prologue. The ecology will suffer greatly from the feeding habits of the earth's 7 billion people; by 2050, the number of people on the planet will approach 10 billion, exacerbating the damage. Our natural resources are currently being depleted by food production methods. The term "Anthropocene" refers to the current geological period in which human activity is the primary cause of

change in many earth systems, including the atmospheric, geologic, hydrologic, and biospheric ones. The main human activity responsible for environmental change on a global scale is agriculture.

How human diet threatening the animal existence?

According to a research, 60% of animal populations have been wiped out since 1970. Since 1970, humanity has killed off 60% of all mammals, birds, fish, and reptiles, prompting the world's top scientists to issue a dire warning that the extinction of biodiversity poses a threat to civilization. It realises that the planet's massive and expanding food and resource consumption is harming the multibillion-year-old web of life that eventually provides human society with clean air, water, and everything else.

3-HIGHS

The "3-highs" of unhealthy eating include an excessive intake of calories, meals that are highly processed, and an excessive intake of animal products. The "3-highs" are not only bad for the environment, but they also have an adverse effect on people's health. Foods made from animals require more resources than meals made from plants. Higher greenhouse gas emissions are associated with dairy and red meat, particularly beef. Other facets of human health and environmental deterioration are intricately tied to food production and use. Dietary illnesses and environmental deterioration are predicted to rise quickly as a result of the shift in global diets towards greater intake of foods linked to higher disease risk or higher environmental effects. Future generations will have to cope with the environmental effects of eating beef. A significant cause of problems including pollution, food shortages, and ocean acidification is the meat industry. It takes a lot of water, energy, and land to raise animals for food.

To create place for factory farms and grazing animals who consume all the flora and leave the land barren, entire ecosystems are being destroyed. This is causing deserts to expand more rapidly.

Points which can reduce the degradation of the environment :-

1. Understand food as a process, not a product

It's common for people to pass by food on a grocery store shelf without giving it any attention. Between the farm and the fork, food must be prepared, packed, shipped, advertised, and sold. Many of these stages have environmental risks. You're in a better position to make wise food decisions when you take the entire food chain into account.

2. Support sustainable agriculture

Purchase your food from manufacturers and merchants who specialised in green items. Compared to traditional farming, sustainable agriculture may save up to 56% on energy costs, emits 64% less greenhouse gases, and promotes more biodiversity. Additionally, because sustainably produced goods tend to be more labor-intensive, they can boost employment by 30%, command higher prices, and yield greater wages.

3. Know what you're eating

Despite their potential danger to human health, pesticides, herbicides, and antimicrobial medications are regularly utilised to boost agricultural and animal outputs. Additionally, farm runoff can harm aquatic habitats and soil. When possible, pick whole, responsibly farmed foods over heavily processed, intensively farmed meals. Prepare your own meals rather than getting takeaway.

4. Plant your own garden

The need for chemicals like pesticides, packaging, preservatives, transportation fuel, and cold chain storage is decreased when you grow your own fruit. The most nutrient-dense foods include fruits, vegetables, and herbs when they are eaten in their natural form.

5. Buy local

Purchasing locally grown food not only helps small businesses and farms but also cuts down on the use of fossil fuels for transportation and cold storage. Additionally, it lessens the chance of food loss in route.

6. Adopt a plant-rich diet

Currently, 60% of the world's agricultural area is dedicated to the grazing of cattle, and many populations consume more animal products than is healthy. Adopting diets high in plants would reduce the need for land, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, use water more efficiently, and increase animal wellbeing.

7. Reduce food waste

All food produced is wasted or lost in the proportion of one third. To prevent waste, make a plan in advance and only purchase the food you will really eat. Utilise every edible component of the food you purchase.

Rice and other basics should be measured out before cooking, and food should be stored appropriately (use your freezer if you have one).

8. Avoid unnecessary packaging

In addition to the estimated 5 trillion single-use plastic bags that contaminate land and sea every year, food packaging regularly ends up in landfills. When feasible, choose food that is not packed, packaged sparingly, or packaged sustainably. Use baskets while grocery shopping, use reusable or cloth bags, and put food in glass jars or wrap it in beeswax or other eco-friendly materials when storing it.

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