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TOM TOM ENGLISH



Saving the world through vegetables

VOCABULARY

Emissions =

The production and discharge of something, especially gas e.g. CO₂ emissions

Burden =

A heavy load

Greenhouse Gas

=

Gases that contribute to the warming of the earth through the "greenhouse effect"

Vegan =

Person who doesn't consume any animal products, including eggs and milk

Read the article overleaf and discuss these questions:

1. Do you agree that it would be better for us to eat less meat and more vegetables? Why? Why not?
2. Were you surprised by the benefits of switching to a vegetarian or vegan diet?
3. Do you know anyone who is a vegetarian or vegan? Do you think they are healthier than other people?
4. Why are there so few vegetarians in Japan?
5. If the Japanese government introduced limits on consumption of meat and fish, would you support it? Why? Why not?
6. Do you think you could easily consume 15% fewer calories? How about 56% less red meat?

VOCABULARY

Per Capita =

Per person (Latin, literally means per head) e.g. GDP per capita

Obesity =

Overweight to the point where it is damaging to health (adjective is obese)

Sustainable =

Something that can be maintained at a certain level or rate

Tackle =

To make efforts to deal with a problem

By eating less meat and more fruit and vegetables, the world could avoid several million deaths per year by 2050, cut planet-warming **emissions** substantially, and save billions of dollars in healthcare costs and climate damage, researchers say.

A new study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA, is the first to estimate both the health and climate change impacts of a global move towards a more plant-based diet.

Unbalanced diets are responsible for the greatest health **burden** around the world, and our food system produces more than a quarter of **greenhouse gas emissions**, said lead author Marco Springmann of the Oxford Martin Program on the Future of Food.

“What we eat greatly influences our personal health and the global environment,” he said. The Oxford University researchers modelled the effects of four different diets by 2050: a ‘business as usual’ scenario; one that follows global guidelines including minimum amounts of fruits and vegetables and limits on red meat, sugar and total calories; a vegetarian diet; and a **vegan** diet.

Adopting a diet in line with the global guidelines could avoid 5.1 million deaths per year by 2050, while 8.1 million fewer people would die in a world of **vegans** who do not consume animal products, including eggs and milk.

When it comes to climate change, following dietary recommendations would cut food-related emissions by 2%, adopting vegetarian diets would cut them by 63% and vegan diets by 70%.

Dietary shifts could produce savings of \$700 billion to \$1,000 billion per year on healthcare, unpaid care and lost working days, while the economic benefit of reduced **greenhouse gas emissions** could be as much as \$570 billion, the study said.

The researchers found that three-quarters of all benefits would occur in developing countries, although the **per capita** impacts of dietary change would be greatest in developed nations, due to higher rates of meat consumption and **obesity**. The economic value of health improvements could be comparable with, and possibly larger than, the value of the avoided damage from climate change. “The value of those benefits makes a strong case for increased public and private spending on programs for healthier and more environmentally **sustainable** diets”.

The study looked at regional differences which could be used to identify the most suitable interventions for food production and consumption. For example, lower red meat consumption would have the biggest effect in East Asia, the West and Latin America, while boosting fruit and vegetable intake was found to be the largest factor in cutting deaths in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Lower calorie intake, leading to fewer overweight people, would play a key role in improving health in the Eastern Mediterranean, Latin America and Western nations, the study said. But it will not be easy. To achieve a diet that sticks to common guidelines would require a 25% increase in the number of fruits and vegetables eaten globally, and a 56% cut in red meat. Overall humans would need to consume 15% fewer calories.

“We do not expect everybody to become **vegan** but climate change impacts of the food system will be hard to **tackle** and will require more than just technological changes. Adopting healthier and more environmentally sustainable diets can be a large step in the right direction.”