



New Study: Avoiding Animal Products Is the Best Thing You Can Do for the Planet

By Kathy Pollard
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Since *Forks Over Knives* debuted in 2011, there's been an [explosion of nutritional research](#) supporting the idea that a whole-food, plant-based diet can provide optimal health for just about anyone. But the benefits of plant-based eating go far beyond personal health. In recent years, a multitude of studies have shown that the production of animal products (any food that comes from animal sources) is detrimental to the environment, causing significantly more freshwater pollution, deforestation, soil degradation, and greenhouse gas emissions than the production of plant foods. A [new report](#) published in the journal *Science* underscores these points and suggests that cutting meat and dairy from your diet might be the single best thing you can do for the planet.

Animal Products: High on Environmental Impact, Low on Efficiency

The study looked at data from around 38,000 farms and found that producing animal-based foods accounts for utilization of more than 80 percent of the world's farmland but provides only 18 percent of our calories and 37 percent of the protein eaten. That's quite a conversion loss. Additionally, production of that meat and dairy delivers 60 percent of the agricultural greenhouse gas emissions heating up our planet.

Researchers note that even grass-fed beef, considered by many locavores to have a relatively low environmental impact, is still responsible for much higher impacts than plant-based food. Compared with green crops grown for humans, such as peas, the lowest-impact beef uses 36 times the land and produces six times the emissions, the *Science* study found.

“Converting grass into [meat] is like converting coal to energy,” lead researcher Joseph Poore, from the University of Oxford, points out. “It comes with an immense cost in emissions.”

In other words, we are cashing out our limited resources without consideration of our future.

Solutions Start With Us

With a [growing population in a world that's heating up](#), the challenges ahead are daunting. The good news is that consumer habits drive agriculture, meaning that you have the power to make a difference. As Poore concludes, adopting a plant-based diet has a “far bigger [effect] than cutting down on your flights or buying an electric car.” Such actions only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but changing our diet [reduces a multitude of environmental problems](#), on top of benefiting our health.

Transitioning to a sustainable diet of whole plant foods, to nourish ourselves and protect our planet, is a win-win. And fortunately for you, you have all the tools that you need for the task, right here.

Ready to get started? Check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool to keep you on a healthy plant-based path.