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Headline: 'Fight climate change one plate at a time,' Filipinos lobby Congress

Byline: Tessa R. Salazar

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Skeptics of climate change are being swept away by a swelling body of evidence that proves man-made factors have played a significant role in the onset and acceleration of this global meteorological phenomenon that has caused weather extremes at all corners of this planet.

On July 29, 2012, The Guardian's Leo Hickman wrote that on land, the earth has warmed by 1.5 degrees C over the past 250 years, and "humans are almost entirely the cause," according to a scientific study set up to address climate change skeptics' concerns about whether human-induced global warming has actually been occurring.

The UK-based The Guardian also quoted physicist professor Richard Muller, a climate change skeptic who founded the Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature project as saying, "We were not expecting this, but as scientists, it is our duty to let the evidence change our minds." The Guardian also quoted him as saying that he now considered himself a "converted skeptic" and his views had undergone a "total turnaround" in a short span of time.

Dominant cause of warming

Discovery News on Dec. 6, 2011, reported that it would be "extremely likely" that human activities have been "by far the dominant cause of warming" in the earth's climate since 1950, citing a study published in the Journal Nature Geoscience.

The analysis article "Human Factors Huge on Climate Change" by Kieran Mulvaney explains that most predictions of temperature increase as a result of greenhouse gas emissions employ a technique called "optimal fingerprinting," which involves statistical analysis of complex climate models. The article also quoted Reto Knutti of the Institute for Atmospheric and Climate Science in Switzerland as saying "Optimal fingerprinting is a powerful technique, but to most people it's a black box."

In its Nov. 30, 2009, edition, Forbes Magazine featured Patrick O. Brown, a Stanford University biochemist who invented the DNA microarray (a tool measuring how cells make use of their DNA) and took a break from his normal scientific work in order to change the way the world produced and consumed food. According to Forbes, Brown had wanted to put an end to animal farming, or at least put a significant dent in the global hunger for cows, pigs and chickens. Brown, who has been a vegetarian for more than three decades (and a vegan for five years, according to Forbes), cited livestock as a culprit in human-caused carbon dioxide emissions, human-caused methane and human-caused nitrous oxide.

Meatless Monday Philippines—led by founder neuroscientist Custer Deocaris—singled out a 2010 article in The Guardian that cited the United Nations Environment Program's international panel of sustainable resource management declaring, "As the global population surges towards a predicted 9.1-billion people by 2050, Western tastes for diets rich in meat and dairy products are unsustainable." Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), has also urged the public to observe one meat-free day a week to curb carbon emissions.

Representative Teddy Casiño, on August 13, delivered a privilege speech themed “Fighting Climate Change, One Plate at a Time” in support of the Meatless Monday bill (HB6311).

‘Luntiang Lunes’

In his speech, Casiño said, “In Sophia school, which our guest students attend, they have adopted a program called Meatless Mondays which originated from a joint effort of the Johns Hopkins and Columbia University Schools of Public Health. Sa Tagalog po tinatawag itong Luntiang Lunes.

He said: “Our geography has always caused us weather problems, but year after year it has worsened due to climate change. This is not surprising anymore as the Philippines has long been cited among the most vulnerable countries affected by climate change.

“The recent report by the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) and the German Alliance Development Works listed the Philippines as top three among countries facing the highest risk against climate change. The logical question that should be asked, is, how do we mitigate, if not stop climate change? This is the message that our students bring with them today. Their call is ‘Fight climate change, one plate at a time.’ Yes, one plate at a time.”

It has been estimated that the Meatless Monday campaign, when practiced by 25.7 million Filipino students in a span of one year, could have the same beneficial effects on CO2 emission as taking 94,392 cars off the road, or having 12.35 million trees planted and grown for 10 years.

Double disease burden

Casiño said the bill also aims to address the double disease burden of child malnutrition and adult obesity.

According to a 2008 study by the Department of Science and Technology-Food and Nutrition Research Institute, a quarter of adult Filipinos are already hypertensive and 7 million are diagnosed with diabetes, making the Philippines one of the world’s Top 10 epicenters of the disease.

Each year, 200,000 Filipinos die of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), with heart diseases as the leading cause of death. Long-term healthcare costs for NCDs are staggering. They also undermine the country’s economic development.

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