

Headline: Experts take serious look on how food choices impact climate change

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Finally, the impact of what people eat and how it can help end humanity's damage to the climate is now being taken seriously.

No less than the Union of Concerned Scientists' director of Climate Research and Analysis Doug Boucher has said this. Boucher, a senior scientist, is an expert in preserving tropical forests to curtail global warming emissions. He has been participating in United Nations international climate negotiations since 2007, and his expertise has helped shape US and UN policies. He holds a PhD in ecology and evolutionary biology from the University of Michigan.

Paris Agreement

Boucher cited in the UCS blog site on May 4 that on Earth Day a few weeks ago, 171 countries officially signed the Paris Agreement on climate change. Boucher said that in doing so, they agreed to the long-term goal of ending humanity's damage to the climate—that is, reducing our emissions of global-warming pollution to zero—in the second half of this century.

"One encouraging part of the ongoing scientific discussion about how to achieve this ambitious goal, is that we're finally starting to take seriously the impact of what people eat. Three recent studies show that it makes a big difference, to the climate as well as to our health. As I've written before—in this blog, in UCS reports and in the scientific journal *Nature Climate Change*—by far the biggest impact of diet on climate comes from eating high on the food chain by consuming lots of meat—but not just any meat. What really makes a difference is the amount of beef."

Boucher showed a graphic from one of the new studies, published by Janet Ranganathan and colleagues in a chapter of the annual International Food Policy Research Institute Global Food Policy Report and the World Resources Institute that indicates beef has, by far, the largest climate footprint, not only compared to plants but also the alternative animal-based foods.

Acknowledged

Boucher is just one of the many scientists who have acknowledged the link between eating animals and climate change.

An article by a prestigious research organization WorldWatch Institute ("Livestock and Climate Change: What if the key actors in climate change are...cows, pigs, and chickens?") showed that the environmental impact of the lifecycle and supply chain of animals raised for food has been vastly underestimated, and in fact accounts for at least half of all human-caused greenhouse gases (GHGs), according to Robert Goodland and Jeff Anhang, who are coauthors of "Livestock and Climate Change."

Worldwide greenhouse gas emissions have been attributable to animal products such as cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats, camels, pigs and poultry (chicken). The "Livestock and Climate Change" reported that livestock and their byproducts actually account for at least 32.6 billion tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) per year, or 51 percent of annual worldwide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the prerequisite substance for climate change.

Livestock farming now accounts for the use of 70 percent of the global freshwater and 38 percent of the world's land-use conversion. Some 70 percent of the Amazon Rainforest, in fact, has already been cleared for grazing and feed crop production.

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