

On Reducing Meat Consumption and Effectiveness of Vegan Activism in Achieving It

Goals:

- Reduce meat consumption in a population as much as possible
- Eventually outlaw the consumption of meat from animals

Meat consumption is not uniform. There are cultural and economic factors influencing the amount of meat a person consumes. Common sense may suggest an increasing in the number of vegetarians or vegans will reduce the consumption of meat, but it has thus far had no impact. In fact, vegan activism as it exists today may be counterproductive.

There are a few things that are relevant for the arguments I make later:

- Most people who quit meat go back to eating meat. A study by HRC suggested [84% go back to eating meat](#).
- Most vegetarians say ethical factors influence their choice of diet more than health factors. ([Paper](#))
- Reducing meat consumption per capita has a greater impact than a percentage of population going vegetarian or vegan. This is because people can and do back to eating meat. A study (N=11,000) claimed 84% do, which is 5 in 6 people. Even if we reduce it down to only 2 in 3 people going back, if everyone went vegan 66% would go back to eating meat. A 33% reduction in meat consumption per capita in the same population would achieve the same goal, and is within the realm of possibility.
- Turning everyone into a vegan is impossible. Even if it was outlawed today, people would still consume meat. This has to do with the sociological and psychological factors effecting the rational decision making of human beings. There is very little you can do to influence their choice. As surprising as it may seem to some, a person might choose to not give up meat because it tastes good, despite having the knowledge that animals suffer. Read: [Rational Choice Theory](#)
- It's impossible to be vegan in developing economies. Vegetarian? Yes. Vegan, no, unless you live in an urban area or are very rich. Meat is inexpensive and protein rich and often subsidized, so it's often cheaper than non-meat protein rich foods.

- Most people currently vegan say their motivation is largely ethical. Raising awareness among the population about animal abuse and the current state of animal agriculture as a whole might work for some people. But in my experience, most people are desensitized. I've seen several *Dominions* in real life and watching another has not significantly impacted me, I was greeted with a familiar sight, one that I've seen first hand.

There are several kinds of Vegan activism and it would be unfair to clump all of them together into one. So I'll describe what I'm talking about instead:

- Suggesting people watch videos of animal cruelty
 - Doesn't work for the reasons I mentioned above, some people are desensitized
- Being confrontational, and employing an all-or-nothing approach
 - This can be easily interpreted by the other person as an attack. They will get defensive. You lost your battle before it began. You can call them names, but at that point it'll be a pointless discussion.
- Aiming your activism at the regular consumers of meat
 - This is also unproductive and has very little impact.

Before suggesting an alternative to the kind of activism described above, I want to mention a few things that consumers consider as barriers to going vegan as [outlined by this study](#):

- Meat enjoyment
- Eating routines (Social and cultural)
- Health conceptions
- Difficulty in preparing vegetarian foods
- Accessibility

Here's what the activism should be about instead:

- Asking restaurants and eateries to serve vegan food.
- Encouraging those that serve vegan food currently.
- Normalizing vegan foods
- When engaging in conversations with one or more consumers, be empathetic and understanding of their needs and encourage them to reduce their meat

consumption, instead of attempting to get them to vegan. The former is easier, people are more willing to do it, and has a net overall benefit.

- Teaching children the benefits of vegetarian and vegan diets, and raising awareness of cruelty in animal farming.

The current “confrontational” kind of activism could end up doing more harm than good. Veganism has been the butt of a joke for quite some time now, and activism directed at consumers could stray them away from veganism or reducing meat consumption forever.

There are a few things beyond activism that might help further reduce the killing of animals: Alternatives to meat. Vegan meat and cultured meat are here and if mass produced, could potentially reduce killing of animals for meat to insignificant levels.