

# The Facts on a Plate

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Most of us associate the climate crisis with oil companies, airports and car manufacturers. It's only recently that the globalised food system, which also relies on vast fossil fuel inputs at every stage, has been shown to produce as much as one-third of our total global greenhouse gas emissions. Livestock production is responsible for a significant proportion of these emissions.

- ♥ On a global scale the meat industry generates nearly 1/5 of the man-made greenhouse gases (GHG's) that are accelerating global climate change, far more than transport.<sup>1</sup> In the EU livestock production is responsible for 15% of GHG emissions<sup>2</sup> and in the UK it is responsible for about 8.5%.<sup>3</sup>
- ♥ About 40 calories of fossil fuel energy go into every calorie of feed lot beef, as opposed to the 2.2 calories of fossil fuel energy which goes into producing one calorie of plant-based protein.<sup>4</sup>
- ♥ The estimated 634 gallons of fresh water required to produce one 5.2 ounce (147g) beef burger would be enough for a four-hour shower.<sup>5</sup> For comparison, the same quantity of tofu requires 143 gallons of water to produce.<sup>6</sup>
- ♥ A low meat diet (defined as 70g of beef and 325g of chicken and eggs per week), as recommended by Harvard Medical School, can reduce how much we need to spend in tackling climate change – estimated to be around \$40 trillion globally by 2050 – by 54%. Cutting out meat altogether or avoiding or avoiding ruminant meat (cows, sheep, goats) would cut the cost by 70%, and a vegan diet by 80%.<sup>7</sup>

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5 Hoekstra AY and Chapagain AK, Water footprints of nations: Water use by people as a function of their consumption pattern. *Water Resource Management*, 2007; 21(1): 35-48.

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