The Unspoken Truth: Animal Agriculture and Climate Change

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Abstract:
Despite the best efforts from governmental agencies around the world, global climate change continues to become detrimental. Therefore it is important that humans collectively find new ways to innovate and regenerate efforts to improve the earth’s sustainability. In light of new research conducted over the last fifteen years, it has become apparent that all individuals can make a positive impact on improving the earth’s climate in just a few short years. Due to overwhelming evidence from the economical, health, and environmental science sectors, a transition to a more plant-based diet would greatly reduce both water consumption and global greenhouse gas output. In reports from 2008 on, the U.N. found that animal agriculture provided 18% of all greenhouse gases produced\textsuperscript{[1][2]}. This number accounts for all aspects surrounding animal agriculture production, distribution, and consumption. More greenhouse gases are produced as a byproduct from animal agriculture than the entire transportation sector combined. In just the last 50 years, global meat production has quadrupled as demand for meat, eggs, and dairy have increased in western and developing countries alike. Along with this higher demand comes increased need for feed, land, and antibiotics for these animals respectively. Comprising more than 66% of all agriculture production\textsuperscript{[3]} as well as 80% of all antibiotic use\textsuperscript{[4]}, animal agriculture not only uses the majority of viable land in the United States, but aids in the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria, a problem the World Health Organization has deemed a serious threat. If developed countries in the west are able to switch dietary preferences to that of one hundred years ago, this global epidemic may be slowed. The evolution to a more plant based diet presents not only a better use of resources, but could have a massive impact on America’s number one and
two killers, heart disease and cancer. A progression mandating smaller portions within the community would be the initial step towards this evolution.

Americans spend 38 billion dollars a year on food subsidies [5], and of those funds, 17 million [6] go to making fruits and vegetables cheaper and more easily attainable. Through various government check-off programs, today’s current market is seeing a growing need for these unsustainable foods [7]. The only obvious solution to merging the huge gap between food and sustainability is through the movement of education.

Educational health and nutrition classes from elementary school forward may provide positive groundwork for the next generation to build off of. Teaching children how food is produced and how it affects overall health may be a pivotal point in providing a solution to this unknown problem. Along with educational programs, a focus on lobbying for a greater amount of subsidies for healthy sustainable foods may be a way for America to set an example when it comes to proactive climate change management. Proposing various community programs to raise awareness of these issues from economical, social, and health standpoints would be a major step forward in the fight for a more sustainable city and planet.
Works Cited:


