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# APPETITE FOR A PLANT BASED TREATY?

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**The IPCC repeatedly demonstrates that a vegan diet is the optimal diet to drastically reduce food related emissions.**

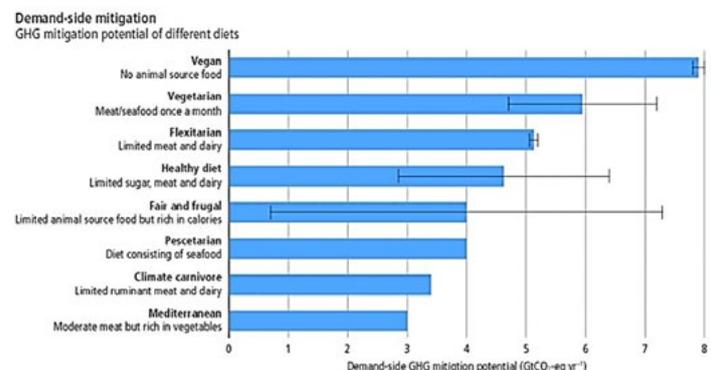
*The Plant Based Treaty offers a roadmap for a fast and just transition to a plant-based food system this decade in response to the climate emergency.*

The current global food system with expanding meat, dairy and egg consumption is alarmingly transgressing planetary boundaries, risking food security, and harming human health and animal welfare.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres' declared the release of the IPCC 6th Assessment as a [code red for humanity](#). 1.5C global warming is imminent; we are on track to reach this threshold around 2030, with a 50% chance of temporarily exceeding 1.5C by [2026](#). "Even if fossil fuel emissions stop immediately, emissions from our food systems alone could increase global temperatures by more than 1.5C." ([Clark et al., 2020](#))"

**Immediate, rapid and sustained cuts to greenhouse gas emissions from both fossil fuels and animal agriculture is imperative to avoiding catastrophic climate breakdown.** Yet there is great debate about how and when to deliver these cuts. Our position is that the continued expansion of animal agriculture by Big Animal Ag is at odds with climate science and sabotaging progress. **The vegan diet is the optimal diet to fight climate change** and could, according to the [IPCC \(2020\) Special Report on Land Use](#), save almost 8 Gigatons Equivalent in greenhouse gas emissions plus more than double if we take in account reforestation of lands currently used to farm animals. This decade we need a dietary shift away from animal to plant-based foods in response to the climate emergency; it's time for a radical overhaul of the global food system.

IPCC 2019: Human dietary choices and greenhouse gas emissions



2019, IPCC SPECIAL REPORT: SPECIAL REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND LAND  
FIGURE 5.12

## Negotiate a Plant Based Treaty now

Animal agriculture is the primary driver of accelerating methane, deforestation and loss of carbon sinks, ocean acidification and biodiversity loss. In fact, farming animals for their flesh, skin, and secretions impacts more planetary boundaries than any other industry.

The Paris Agreement is silent on fossil fuels and animal agriculture. We need a Plant Based Treaty that focuses on three core principles: Relinquish the expansion of animal agriculture; Redirect policies such as subsidies, taxes and public information campaigns favoring a plant-based food system; Restore ecosystems and reforest the Earth. We need to stop stalling before we “eat our way to extinction.” Instead, we must face the inconvenient truth and begin global negotiations to provide a worldwide transition to a plant-based economy as a companion to the Paris Climate Agreement.

## We must address the cow in the room: the methane emergency

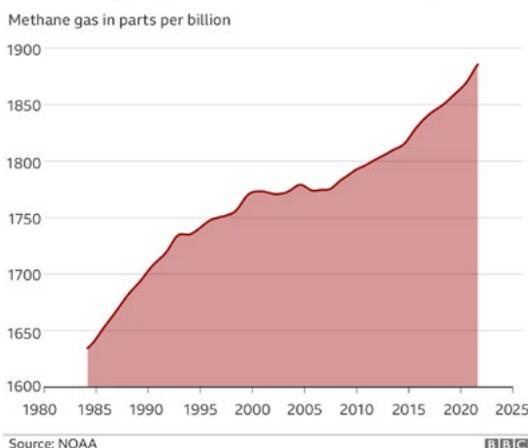
Methane levels increased by a record-breaking 17 parts per billion (ppb) in 2021, up from the 15.3 ppb rise record set in 2020. The UN has called for [45% cuts](#) to methane by 2030 to keep temperature rises within 1.5C. “Cutting methane is the biggest opportunity to slow warming between now and 2040. We need to face this emergency,” says IPCC lead reviewer Durwood Zaelke.

Animal agriculture is responsible for 32% of human-caused methane. “Ethically, all unnecessary methane sources have to be cut as fast and far as feasible. That means global veganization is now a survival imperative,” says Dr Peter Carter, an IPCC expert reviewer.

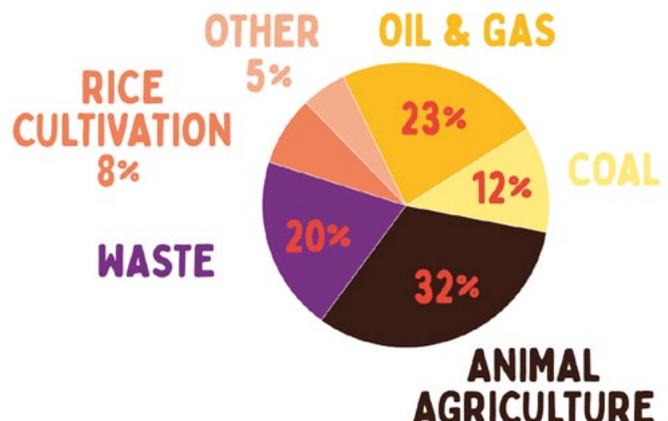
Earth is home to an expanding population of more than one billion cows and has altered our landscape beyond recognition. Directing resources to speed up a transition to a healthy plant-based food system, along with reductions in food waste and an end to fracking, could deliver the life saving 45% methane cuts and allow us to restore carbon sinks to absorb carbon from the atmosphere.

Recently, 112 countries signed a [Global Methane Pledge](#) to cut emissions by 30% by 2030. This offered hope that methane would finally be addressed. ***The Global Methane Pledge falls short of the 45% cuts needed; the states that have made pledges represent only about half of human caused emissions. In addition, the pledge is voluntary and unenforceable, and is yet to offer a road map to meet targets.***

Methane gas production is continuing to rise



Global Methane Emissions



Talk of methane masks for cows, methane-reducing vaccines and seaweed additives for cattle feed is just hot air and more 'blah blah blah' instead of talking about the obvious climate solution of eliminating meat and dairy consumption and replacing it with healthy, plant-based foods. It smacks in the face of science and distracts from the damning IPCC 6th assessment reports, which once again show that **veganism is the optimal diet for the planet**. Prof. Drew Shindell of Duke University [believes](#) that changing the way we farm cows could only bring small changes, but says, "**You could make very great inroads into methane emissions by dietary change**, but we are just not that sure how quickly that will happen." Evidently, dietary change is urgently needed but is simply delayed even further by unprolific approaches focused on minimizing the emissions from meat and dairy producers, as opposed to minimizing meat and dairy itself.

## Diet change, not climate change

The Plant Based Treaty has a roadmap to ignite an essential plant-based food revolution this decade. States need to negotiate the **Relinquishing** of animal agriculture by freezing the further expansion of animal agriculture to stop the problem from further worsening. Measures must include an end to new animal farms, slaughter facilities, land use change for animal agricultural purposes and ensure deforestation is halted. We also need an immediate stop to financing our own extinction; **Redirecting** subsidies, taxes and public information campaigns are part of the toolkit for a just transition to a plant-based food economy, with support for both farmers and consumers alike.

## Reforestation and restoration of ecosystems will be key for climate change mitigation and adaptation

The [Declaration on Forests and Land Use](#) launched at COP26 has been signed by 141 countries. It includes a commitment to: "Conserve forests and other terrestrial ecosystems and accelerate their restoration; Implement and, if necessary, redesign agricultural policies and programmes to incentivise sustainable agriculture, promote food security, and benefit the environment." Since the declaration, deforestation attributed to animal agriculture has continued unabated. Destruction of the Amazon in the first four months of 2022 hit records with 1,954 square km deforested, an increase of 69% compared to the same period of 2021, clearing an area more than double the size of New York City. According to research by [Joseph Poore and Thomas Nemecek](#), globally almost 80% of farmland is used to rear animals yet produces just 18% of global calories.

By **Restoring** ecosystem services such as CO2 sequestration, we can mitigate further contributions to climate change through restoring and reinstating carbon sinks. Biodiversity is key to both human and planetary health and is declining faster than at any time in history. Animal agriculture is a leading cause of the biodiversity crisis. As the world embraces a shift to a healthy plant-based food system, significant portions of land can be restored and repurposed, increasing capacity for both climate change mitigation and adaptation. For example, mangroves can be restored to absorb CO2 and strengthen flood defences; land and sea forests can be planted, and peatlands can be restored, all of which will greatly enhance the efficacy of carbon sequestration. Land can be allocated in fairer ways whereby ecosystems are replenished and restored, including diverse agroecological crop growing, rewilding initiatives or gifted to communities to create local growing schemes, community gardens and plant orchards that provide both nourishment and resilience from weather extremes.

Many Indigenous communities live in pristine forests, which they rely on for food, water, shelter, and their cultural survival. Cattle farming and animal feed have destroyed forests at an alarming rate. A just transition to a plant-based food system would use significantly less land and allow these stolen forests to be returned to their rightful guardians to nurture and protect for future generations.

Critically, those who contribute least to global climate change are most affected by its impacts. We cannot address climate change without addressing social inequality and access to nutritious plant-based foods. The IPCC Working Group 2 recommends subsidizing healthy, plant-based foods to make these more accessible. They said, “Subsidies directed at staple foods and animal sourced foods could be shifted towards diversified production of plant-based foods in order to change the relative price of foods and thus dietary choice.”

**There are many co-benefits of shifting to a plant-based food system.** It would reduce air, land and water pollution, improve food security and food justice, reduce healthcare costs and provide economic savings for consumers. A shift to a vegan diet would also have positive impacts on multiple public health crises including diet-related diseases, with reduced deaths from heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

**Key steps needed to address the escalating climate and environmental crises:**

1. We must **Relinquish** current trends in agricultural expansion for meat and dairy products
2. We must **Redirect** current consumption patterns and resources away from animal products to sustainable, regenerative plant-based food systems
3. We must **Restore** degraded critical ecosystems and the ecosystem services they provide

**“Rapidly reducing animal agriculture and shifting humanity to a plant-based diet is one of the best, easiest, and fastest things we can do to save the planet.” - Dr Peter Kalmus**

There is no time to lose. It’s a “Do or die!” decade. We need to begin this transformation today if we are to limit global overheating and address the escalating loss of ecosystems and biodiversity. The solution is so simple. Food system transformation, including a shift away from resource-heavy animal products to plant-based foods is equally as critical as eliminating fossil fuels. People may think it’s inconvenient to be vegan, however, what is more inconvenient, changing your diet and food system or having three feet of water in your kitchen?



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