A Direct Relationship Of Livestock Farming And Our Diets To Climate Change

Your diet might be destroying the planet. One of the most silenced issues of climate change is the fact that livestock farming is one of the major causes of our warming planet. Shifting away from animal products could be the most effective way to end climate change. Switching to a plant-based diet is important because the planet is suffering from livestock farming and the effects will only continue to worsen as the demand for meat increases. Going vegan or even vegetarian is one of the easiest and most effective ways that humans can slow the effects of climate change. Livestock farming and animal product consumption is responsible for large parts of greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and water usage related to climate change and those effects will only worsen unless humans adopt a more plant-based diet.

The most familiar issue related to climate change is the emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. However, it is not well known that livestock production is, unfortunately, one of the most prominent contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. In the article “Is the Rising Demand for Animal Protein Fuelling Climate Change?” it is stated that “globally 18% of human-caused GHG emissions could be attributed to livestock agriculture, and this was a larger share than transportation.” (Mitloehner 421). Although it is perceived that transportation is what causes the most greenhouse gas emissions, livestock production is proved to contribute more. This should be a major concern and addressed immediately. Mitloehner is implying the fact that we need to turn our attention away from transportation for the time being and begin focusing on the larger contributor to GHG emissions, which is proven to be livestock farming. If not, greenhouse gases will continue to be emitted at a steady rate and more heat will get trapped in our atmosphere, meaning that the earth will continue to warm unnaturally. Therefore, if humans can prevent these emissions of greenhouse gases, they should take the most effective opportunity that they have. Avoiding animal products is the most productive way to decrease the amount of GHG emissions by 18%. Another article published last August states that If humans collectively adopt a more plant-based diet, we could reduce the equivalent of up to 8 gigatons of carbon dioxide per year. (Compton 9). This data supports the fact that adopting a plant-based diet on a global scale can and will reduce the number of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere if humans are willing to do so. Decreasing the amount of GHG emissions would give the Earth a chance to regenerate, preventing other effects of global warming such as the melting ice caps and damage to the Earth's ecosystems. This, unfortunately, becomes harder as the demand for animal products will continue to increase over the coming years.

The demand for animal products is projected to steadily increase in the future, meaning that the Earth will continue to suffer from the consequences. This is a concern that should be the main cause for humans to change their diet. An article published by National Geographic states that the appetite for meat is growing as the world develops and becomes more affluent. (Wood 1). The article is saying that more people are able to afford meat, and purchase rates are increasing as the world develops economically. Therefore, the appetite for animal products will continue to increase if changes are not made towards a botanically-based diet on an international level. This rising demand is already taking a toll on our environment in the form of increasing rates of deforestation, water usage, and GHG emissions. The expanding need for animal products has to be stopped now before it's too late, and the effects are irreversible. An

article published by One Green Planet states, “over the next 30 years, the worldwide demand for meat is expected to increase by 60-70 per cent.” (Smith 7). In other words, the effects of livestock farming related to climate change are expected to increase by 60-70 per cent. Smith proves that the demand for meat is expected to more than double within this semicentennial, which clarifies the reality of what the current generation's future will look like if steps are not taken towards a globally adopted plant-based diet. This is also what needs to be done if humans want to preserve a prosperous environment where the Earth's ecosystems can thrive. Switching to an eco-friendly diet can also have an effect on ending deforestation.

Livestock farming uses excessive amounts of land and largely contributes to deforestation. By switching to a vegetarian or vegan diet, land use for livestock farming will dramatically decrease, solving the problem of deforestation. An article published by the Smithsonian institution proves that vegan diets require 95 per cent less land use compared to meat-eaters (Smith 6). This is a huge difference in land use that could be revolutionary in the aspect of ending deforestation. If plant-based diets became more common, land can be saved and forests won't have to be destroyed anymore. This would allow for the preservation of our environment and give humans a chance to lower the other effects of climate change that are caused by livestock farming. An article published in 2013 states that “Livestock farming is the world’s largest user of land resources.” (Scholtz 249). Scholtz proves that what we eat is causing deforestation when he states that animal farming is taking up large amounts of land. Due to the rising demand, deforestation will continue to occur at a more rapid rate unless fewer amounts of animal products are consumed by humans. By reducing the worldwide animal product intake, deforestation will be able to end in the livestock farming industry. Some may argue this point of view by saying that eco-friendly diets are too difficult or expensive, however, implementing sustainable diets with flexibility is a compromisable solution that is relatively easy to do. An article published by NBC News says that things, like eating vegetarian once a week or eating one vegan meal a day, is an easy way to help out the planet. (Compton 13). Compton proves that sustainable diets can be unique and specialized to each person's lifestyle. Helping decrease the effects of climate change through what you eat doesn't always mean immediately going vegan or vegetarian. Having flexibility in how you decrease your meat intake is okay, and still an effective way to help out the environment as long as you cut down on meat or dairy whenever you can. This is also an extremely effective way to eventually ease into a fully plant-based diet, which can save land and water.

The amount of water used to farm cattle is disheartening. This is a concern that should be a main cause for humans to switch to a plant-based diet. A page in the South African Journal of Animal Science states that it takes 15,500 liters of water to produce 1k of beef. (Scholtz 250). This data from Scholtz puts reality into perspective. Again, due to the rising demand for meat, the usage of water will only increase unless human's eating habits are changed. Some might say that taking shorter showers or turning off the faucet when you brush your teeth will make a bigger difference, however, they are wrong. An average eight-minute shower only uses 17.2 gallons of water meaning that two minutes less in the shower will only save 4.3 gallons. Discarding a single burger or steak and replacing it with a salad will save 15,345 to 15,422 gallons of water. This is proven by an article written in 2012 which states that “it takes 100 to 200 times more water to raise a pound of beef than it does to raise a pound of plant foods” (McCarthey, Sanchez 13). Here, McCarthy and Sanchez are proving that a plant-based diet does save immense amounts of water compared to a meat eater's diet. Conservation of water is now more important than ever, since only 3 per cent of the world's water is freshwater. This should be another reason for plant-based diets to become implemented worldwide. Reducing

the consumption of animal products is the most impactful and effective way to save water.

Livestock farming and our diets have a direct relationship to climate change, and the effects will only have a bigger impact unless humans start adopting an eco-friendly diet. The amount of meat that humans eat largely contributes to the excessive amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, deforestation, land use, and water usage. Therefore, if we want to preserve our environment and possibly end the effects of climate change, we need to lower the rising demand for meat by eating a vegan or vegetarian diet. If not, we will continue to damage the Earth's environment and the overall health of the Earth's many ecosystems.