

FOOD PRODUCTION



VEGANISM – PROS AND CONS

Why veganism isn't as environmentally friendly as you might think

www.independent.co.uk

Deciding to become vegan is not just about the health benefits. For many, one of the driving forces behind deciding to cut out meat and dairy products is to reduce the impact on the environment. Or at least, I thought it was.

This year has seen about 150,000 people taking part in Veganuary – a month to test the waters and see if they can live without animal products. It can be a testing time, but for many it's a short-lived gimmick rather than a lifestyle change, thinly cloaked as being a healthier way of life.

Just look at social media. There are more than 220,000 tags on Instagram for Veganuary and an un-scrollable amount on Twitter, featuring articles such as “12 of the best vegan Instagrammers to follow for Veganuary inspiration”, where it becomes more about how pretty your food is rather than including information on where it's come from and the environmental impact it has.

And they're not the only joyriders hopping on the bandwagon; many companies are seeing the pound signs associated with veganism. Tesco has just launched a vegan range of food, as has Asda. Age-old brand Walls has a non-dairy ice cream, and a whole hoard of newer food brands, such as the cult Pip and Nut and the Coconut Collaborative, base their very being on having no dairy. And almost all the supermarkets have vegan sections on their websites as our obsessions with “free from” items grows.

The world is our oyster

The number of vegans has increased 160 per cent over the past 10 years, but people need to be asking “where has this food come from” as they fill their shopping baskets with the fruits of the world: pomegranates and mangos from India, lentils from Canada, beans from Brazil, blueberries from the US and goji berries from China. Eating lamb chops that come from a farm a few miles down the road is much better for the environment than eating an avocado that has travelled from the other side of the world.

As we greedily plunder the world's bread basket, it's the consumer who benefits, while those at the source can be left high and dry. Take avocados and quinoa, whose prices have been pushed up so much by Western demand that they've become unaffordable to those who depend on them in their country of origin.

Let's 'avo some of that

Kenya – the world's sixth largest exporter of the fruit – banned exporting avocados on Tuesday because the country's supply is at risk. The Agriculture and Food Authority says the average price of a 90kg-bag of avocados has reached 2,560 Kenyan shillings (£18), the highest since May 2014. The majority of shortages have been seen in the most popular varieties, fuerte and hass, but across the board Kenya has seen an 18 per cent increase in its export in the past five years, up to 50,000 tons in 2016.

And they're not the only ones: Australia is also short of the green stuff too, which is causing self-imposed rationing in Queensland as prices have doubled per tray in a year up to A\$95 (£54). This shortage has been caused by production being down in Mexico, where the fruit originated, even though production of avocados there has doubled in three years in a bid to remain the global leader of avocado sales.

Back in December Mexico was considering importing avocados, which have been a staple in the country for tens of thousands of years. The country's economy secretary, Ildefonso Guajardo, said although Mexico now supplies around 45 per cent of the world's avocados, it wasn't ruling out importing them for their own consumption. And that's because the price per kilo is equivalent to the daily minimum wage, 80 pesos (£3). And it's expected to stay at this level too, causing detrimental effects to those for whom this is a staple.

Now, Mexico makes more money from exporting the stoned fruit than it does from petroleum, and it has become a driving force in illegal deforestation to make way for planting more avocado trees.

Back in 2013 – which the UN dubbed the year of quinoa – prices of the so-called miracle grain of the Andes had reportedly become too expensive for local people to buy. But this grain is a staple part of the region's diet. The price of the superfood has trebled since 2006 to reach \$7 (£5) a kilogram – more expensive than chicken – causing average quinoa consumption in the region to fall in 2014.

Current shifts in the food industry reveal we are aware we need to eat less meat and more vegetables, but there needs to be a sensible balance.

Keep it local

One way to do this is by sourcing food locally. Last year saw plenty of new restaurants open with their own kitchen gardens, growing seasonally and cutting out the carbon footprint of long-distance transportation. Seasonality – along with plant-based diets – are two huge trends from last year.

Clare Smyth, three-Michelin star chef and owner of Core restaurant in London, is a true believer in buying locally: “As a chef I feel a responsibility to support sustainable, independent producers and do my bit for the environment by using local, good quality produce. My menu evolves with the seasons and our suppliers’ availability. It’s not sustainable to buy in strawberries or asparagus from overseas during the winter months when we have an abundance of other fruits and vegetables on our door step.”

But eating just British-grown food can, at times, be incredibly challenging, especially during the winter months, dubbed “the hunger gap”, as River Cottage’s meat expert, Steven Lamb, found during this month of following a vegan diet. “I come from the school of local and seasonal, yet I’ve found January veganism quite a stretch in terms of an abundance of local and seasonal food. For variety I have reached for the odd melon and avocado, which is possibly due to my lack of experience with vegan-appropriate ingredients at this time of the year,” says Lamb.

Home-grown

Growing locally isn’t confined to food from within a certain radius, as that can be limiting. It can be expanded to growing our own, country-wide. According to the Vegan Society, the UK provides good conditions for growing plant proteins for direct human consumption, such as fava beans, peas, hemp seed and sweet lupin. However, the UK currently assigns only 16 per cent of its agricultural land to growing protein crops, much of which are used to feed farmed animals, while at the moment, most of the protein crops such as lentils, chickpeas and quinoa (that are fit for human consumption) are imported from Brazil, Canada and the US.

The organisation’s latest Grow Green report, which aims to find solutions for the farm of the future, says these types of protein grains “could contribute to food self-sufficiency and reduce the need for imports that are rising in cost”.

It goes on to say that “pulses do not require nitrogen inputs and carbon emissions; they are insect-pollinated thus boosting wildlife and biodiversity.”

A move to growing more on our doorstep and relying less on other countries seems a huge step forward, but certainly obtainable.

In August, the UK's first commercial crop of lentils was harvested across farms in England, and went on sale at food festivals and London's Borough Market.

Hodmedod's, which refers to itself (rightly so) as Britain's pulse and grain pioneer, grows quinoa, lentils and fava beans in Essex from £1.79 per 500g.

Founders Josiah Meldrum, Nick Saltmarsh and William Hudson were ahead of the curve and started thinking about this in 2009. "We wanted to know what a more sustainable diet might look like in a small city like Norwich," says Meldrum. "We wanted to make a move towards eating less meat. And what we've seen over the past five years is that people have changed their eating habits and we've had a huge rise in veganism."

But it's not just better for the environment to have less meat. This type of farming is also better for the land. "From a farming point of view, growing these crops and increasing diversity spreads risk and reduces plant diseases. If you're planting wheat year after year, you'll need to do a lot more in order to control the diseases that wheat gets. So, environmentally, growing a bigger range of crops is good for farmers," says Meldrum.

Although the practice of shipping products across thousands of miles will always happen, as Lamb says, it would be better to be able to reduce the necessity of doing so by having a "balance of wild countryside, managed land, pasture as well as space left over for growing crop. All this should be practised and regulated so that it happens at the high welfare, sustainable end of the food spectrum," he adds.

DIY

But we can't rely on a company to do all the hard work. Simple changes can be made at home, from growing your own to ordering a vegetable box, which also cuts out plastic and waste.

South Devon-based organic farm Riverford says one way to reduce the environmental impact of a vegan diet is using a British veg box. "It is always going to taste its best when it's fresh and in season – especially grown in organic soil," says Riverford's Emily Mudderman. The boxes are made up of eight-weekly varieties, using the best seasonal vegetables, which are never carried by air freight and help reduce food waste.

Jack Monroe, chef and Veganuary ambassador, says you barely need any space to be able to grow your own, from strawberries in hanging baskets to a whole variety of salads that can be grown in loaf tins on windowsills.

“Wilko sells plant pots that cleverly clip to standard drainpipes – you could create a living wall of herbs and chillies and allow the gutter overspill to do most of the watering for you.

“Chard is a hardy green and it’s almost impossible to kill. I had the same plant for two years before I moved house and easily had 50 harvests from it. All it needs is a bucket of soil and some sunshine. It can be picked young for salads or grown huge for cooking like spring greens,” says Monroe.

Where’s the balance?

Although it’s important to avoid food that’s travelled thousands of miles, it’s also important that we don’t boycott certain foods that are exported, as farming these foods are lifelines for developing countries.

Meldrum says because quinoa consumption is growing all the time, we do need to be mindful of where the quinoa we buy comes from. “We would always encourage people to buy from a farmers co-op and from smaller-scale producers who are making a return,” he says.

It’s within our grasp to make better food choices to reduce the negative impact on the environment.

STUDY CHECK

What you should be able to write about for your class paper:

- **Be able to develop 2 clear arguments about the negative consequences of veganism. (*Remember: Claim / Develop / Evidence*)**
- **Be able to give at least 2 solutions to the problems related to veganism.**

9 Ways That Going Vegan Can Help the Environment

www.globalcitizen.org

November 1st is World Vegan Day, but no matter the day, it's good to recall all the ways that going vegan can save the world.

No exaggeration. Veganism can save the world. Just ask the UN. The question is: are you brave enough to become a vegan?

Here's why you should give veganism some thought (and become at least a little more vegan):

Veganism combats world hunger

A lot of the food that's grown in the world isn't being eaten by humans. In fact, 70% of the grain grown in the US feeds livestock, and, globally, 83% of farmland is set aside to raise animals.

It's estimated that 700 million tons of food that could be consumed by humans goes to livestock each year.

While meat is more calorically dense than plants, more aggregate calories (and more diverse nutrient profiles) could be produced if that land was dedicated to various plants.

Plus, all the deforestation, overfishing and pollution caused by meat and fish industries limits the overall capacity of the Earth to produce food.

If more farmland was used to grow crops for humans, then more people could be fed at less of an expense to the planet.

This understanding is becoming more urgent as the global population is expected to hit or surpass 9.1 billion by 2050. There's simply not enough land on the planet to raise enough meat to feed everyone the average American diet. Nor can Earth cope with the pollution this would cause.

It conserves water

Hundreds of millions of people around the world don't have access to clean water. Many more people struggle with periodic water scarcity, sometimes

because of drought and sometimes because of mismanagement of water sources.

Livestock guzzle more fresh water than just about anything else. They're also one of the biggest polluters of fresh water.

The more livestock the world replaces with plants, the more water there will be to go around.

It takes 100 to 200 times more water to raise a pound of beef than it does to raise a pound of plant foods. As my colleague Meghan recently noted, "Cutting down on just one kilo of beef saves 15,000 litres of water. And replacing a roast chicken with a hearty veggie chili or bean stew (which has similar protein levels) saves 4,325 litres of water."

It cleans the soil

Similar to how livestock pollute water, they also erode and weaken soil. This is partly because raising livestock usually leads to deforestation, which clears huge swaths of land of the different elements (such as trees) that provide nutrients and resilience, to make room for the livestock to roam.

The world loses roughly the size of Panama each year to deforestation, which also accelerates climate change (trees store carbon)

Raising a diversity of plants, instead, nourishes soil and leads to long-term resilience.

A vegan diet reduces energy consumption

Raising livestock costs a lot of energy. This is due to a wide range of factors including: it takes a long time to raise animals; they consume a lot of food that was cultivated on land that could have been put to other use; meat products need to be shipped and refrigerated; and meat takes a long time to process from slaughterhouse to kitchen table.

Plant-based proteins, meanwhile, can be raised with 8 times less energy costs than meat-based proteins.

It even purifies the air

All the livestock in the world cause more air pollution than all the cars, buses, planes, ships and other modes of transportation in the world combined.

Plants clean the air.

A vegan diet will make you more healthy

All the nutrients you need--and probably don't get enough of--are provided by a vegan diet. Fresh vegetables, fruits and other vegan staples are teeming with nutrients that meat just doesn't provide.

You can get all the protein you need from peanut butter, quinoa, lentils, beans, and much, much more.

The World Health Organization just released a report further outlining the increased risks of colorectal cancer from regular red meat and processed meat consumption. This is on top of existing concerns about heart disease, stroke, and other health complications.

A lot of people have diets that are extraordinarily high in processed food that contain added sugar, preservatives, chemicals, and other ingredients that can impede your health, make you feel sluggish on a daily basis, and lead to long-term health problems. A lot of the time, meat is at the center of this diet.

Of course, vegans can have a highly processed, unhealthy diet. But going vegan forces you to actively consider the ingredients of the foods you are consuming. This daily consideration will most likely, over time, lead to a fresher, more nutrient-rich diet.

It's really amazing how much better you feel when you eat healthy. Try it if you don't believe me.

It's delicious and not as hard as you think

The most common critique I've heard leveled against veganism is that it forces you to retire your taste buds and your free time: because meat is superior in taste and is easier to make.

While taste is subjective and a lot of people "need" their chicken wings on Sunday, I'd argue that the aversion to veganism is based more on cultural education than on actual comparisons.

Vegetables are delicious. They're flavorful when cooked properly. Fruits are delicious. Walnuts, almonds, cashews, peanuts: delicious. Quinoa: delicious.

Nearly all the foods in a vegan diet are super delicious and recipes are very easy to find.

It's fun and can make you a better cook

I think everyone is guilty of some lazy cooking every now and then. And most people hit up take-out once or twice a week after a long day at work or school.

Vegetables can be a bit intimidating. There's so many of them. A lot of them have to be prepared just right. And a lot of people (myself included) didn't grow up in environments that appreciated this (my family relied on boiling frozen vegetables).

But learning about how to access the full flavor and nutrients of a vegetable is fun and

You'll learn a lot about the methods of cooking when you have a counter full of vegetables in front of you.

It's more ethical

Come on. Animals deserve a dignified life. They're intelligent, gentle creatures.

They shouldn't suffer from birth to death. But that's the life a lot of them have when born into factory farms.

Some meat producers are changing their models to adapt to public outrage over factory farms, but the vast majority of meat you encounter in restaurants and grocery stores are produced in grim conditions.

If you even cut meat out of one or two of your meals per week, you'll be making a dent in this grim reality.

I'm not a vegan (although I try to avoid meat when I can), so I'm not casting judgement. Meat is at the core of a lot of diets. It plays a central role during breakfast, lunch, and dinner for many people.

It's on the menu of nearly every restaurant. It's everywhere in supermarkets. You can even toss a lot of meat products right into the microwave. It's abundant, relatively cheap and satisfying.

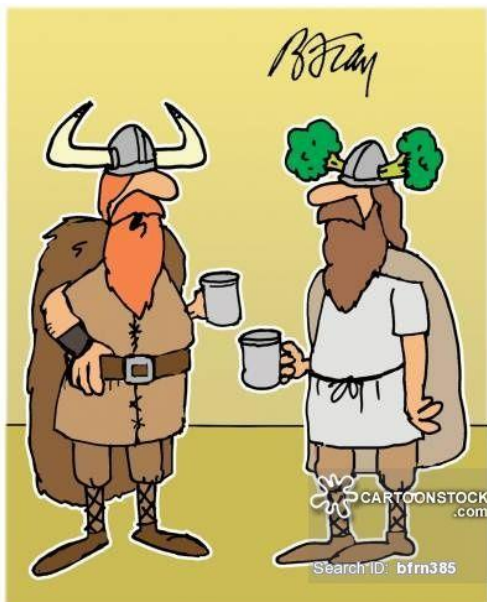
But it's putting a major strain on the planet especially as Western, meat-heavy diets are being adopted by emerging middle classes around the world. And it's unhealthy. And the meat industry is all too often unethical.

Basically, the non-vegans out there (me included) should go vegan, or at least become more vegan than we already are.

It's a journey everyone can become a part of--especially when the steaks--I mean stakes--are so high.

What you should be able to write about for your class paper:

- Be able to develop 4 clear arguments why veganism is good.
(Remember: Claim / Develop / Evidence)
- What is your opinion on veganism after having read the first two texts? Where do you stand on the issue?



"SO, BJORN, I HEAR YOU'VE GONE VEGAN!"



Greenwashing in the food industry:

What is it and how can you avoid it?

www.foodcyclers.com

In 2021, a report found that sustainability is a crucial consideration for 32% of consumers, influenced by greater awareness of climate change and knowledge of its impact. With this in mind, it's not surprising that thousands of brands adapt their marketing to suit the trend. The question is, are these strategies always honest?

According to sustainability and advertising experts, the answer is no – demonstrated by the unique phenomenon of greenwashing.

In today's article, we're going to explain everything you need to know about the trend, including what it is and how you can avoid falling for it.

Let's dive in!

What Is Greenwashing?

While definitions vary online, Cambridge Dictionary offers a simple yet succinct approach to the problem: *greenwashing is an attempt by companies to make people believe they are doing more to protect the environment than they actually are.*

This can manifest itself in various ways and occurs across multiple industries, primarily in the food, fashion and beauty industries. Greenwashing implements a unique set of strategies in order to trick eco-conscious consumers, mainly achieved through advertising and packaging.

Greenwashing in the Food Industry

One of the biggest culprits of greenwashing is the food industry, and it's no surprise why. In less than a decade, veganism has soared in popularity, increasing by up to 500%.

Anxiety surrounding the climate crisis, fuelled by cruel practices in the meat and dairy industries, is felt by 75% of young people. Pair those stats with the growing desire to live healthier lifestyles, and we've got ourselves a recipe for disaster for traditional food brands.

So, what's the solution? Well, instead of actually making positive changes by improving processes and sourcing more organic ingredients, brands are duping consumers instead.

Colours, phrases and logos can all be updated with a view to greenwash the appearance of what was once recognized as unhealthy or environmentally damaging.

For example, a bag of crisps soaked in saturated fats could easily rebrand as a 'natural' product in green packaging simply because potatoes were used to create them. While stringent shoppers might find this easy to spot, those who are less informed are likely to believe in the myth and purchase under false pretences.

How Can You Avoid Greenwashing as a Consumer?

Ignore Packaging, Read Labels

The first step to avoiding food industry greenwashing is probably one of the hardest to achieve, but establishing this habit now will make you a savvy shopper in future. When you're browsing the shelves of your local grocery store, it's easy to get pulled in by pastel-packaging, modern graphics and bold slogans – but what do they really represent?

Instead of relying on green packets or claims of natural goodness, take a closer look at the listed ingredients. Manufacturers have to abide by full transparency by law, so this is the best place to find out precisely what you're eating.

Research Green Practices

If your favourite brand alludes to its status as organic, it's a good idea to check that these claims have substance. In 2008, the Competition Bureau of Canada – an independent law enforcement agency – published a set of guidelines for environmental claims in advertisements. This requires manufacturers to avoid vague or misleading language and include verifiable and specific information to back up their claims.

If your food packaging promises big things when it comes to their natural content but supplies no official certifications, it's probably a prime example of greenwashing. Get to know the laws in your country and make sure you keep them in mind while shopping.

Remain Cautious of Eco-Slogans

One of the most common greenwashing tools used in both packaging and advertising is to harness slogans that suggest products are more eco-friendly than they actually are. Examples include 'good for the heart' or 'kind to the earth.' Phrases like this are specifically designed to target eco-conscious consumers – people who care about their health and the protection of the planet.

While greenwashing is officially illegal in Canada, this behaviour can't be persecuted because the brands only imply what their product can do without explicitly saying it.

If you notice this on your potential food options, take a closer look at the label and make sure those claims are supported by what's inside.

Get Familiar With Sustainability

If you're worried about the planet and the impact of the food industry, one of the best ways to overcome your climate anxiety is to get educated so you can shop with a sharper eye. This isn't just limited to slogan-spotting or packaging analysis either – it's all about understanding where your food comes from, how it's made and how green it really is.

With a food waste crisis burgeoning on and carbon polluting our atmosphere, it's essential to consider what shopping with a greener mindset looks like. Instead of just searching for the healthiest or most environmentally friendly products at the store, you can start making smarter choices altogether.

Some of the ways you can mitigate your impact include:

- ❖ Eating a plant-based diet or opting for vegan options where possible
- ❖ Limiting your intake of red meats if you prefer to remain omnivorous
- ❖ Shopping fresh and local while avoiding plastic-heavy packaging
- ❖ Cooking from scratch, so you know exactly what's in your food and recycling your scraps with a FoodCycler or compost heap

That concludes our quick dive into the world of greenwashing. As an eco-conscious consumer, we hope this guide delivers some insight into how you can shop with purpose and avoid the tricks of the trade.

We're passionate about making healthier and greener choices easy and accessible. If you're interested in learning more about living a sustainable lifestyle and the ongoing food waste crisis, head to the FoodCycler blog today for more key insights.

What you should be able to write about for your class paper:

- Be able to define “greenwashing” and give an example.
- Be able to write about three strategies that can help you identify “greenwashing”.



Food waste: are you throwing your money in the bin?

www.theguardian.com

The cost of living crisis means many Britons are desperately casting around for ways to save money this winter. Yet each year the average family throws away more than £700 of perfectly good food – so could tackling this waste be a win-win for you and the environment?

“You are literally throwing money in the bin by wasting food,” says Helen White, Wrap’s special adviser for household food waste. The charity, which works to reduce waste and promote efficient use of resources, estimates that a family with children could save £730 a year on average by not binning food. “That money could come into very sharp focus as we move further into this year,” White says.

The annual financial cost of these uneaten meals is of a similar magnitude to the predicted step up in gas and electricity bills when the government’s energy price cap is reset in April.

Households are already under financial pressure, with official data for December showing inflation at a near 30-year high of 5.4%, driven by the higher cost of clothes, food and footwear. The upward march of food prices – milk, for example, costs 8% more than a year ago, while margarine is up by a massive 27% – makes avoiding waste even more critical.

The £730 figure is based on Wrap’s most recent food waste data, which estimates that an average family with children bins 244kg of food, or 580 meals, each year. For an individual, the estimated waste figure is 69kg, which adds up to £210.

In total, Britons throw away 6.6m tonnes of food a year, of which 4.5m tonnes, worth £14bn, is edible. This waste is bad for the planet because about a third of the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions are associated with our food and drink.

“It isn’t just a glass of milk, slice of bread or potato that you are wasting,” White says. “It is all the resources that have gone into producing it, so when you waste food you feed climate change.”

Steps you can take to cut down on food waste

The good news is that getting a grip on food waste can start with small lifestyle changes, such as writing a meal plan or shopping list, or just checking your fridge is set at the right temperature. Wrap's Love Food Hate Waste website is full of ideas, including recipes for commonly wasted foods such as potatoes or chicken.

A simple thing to do is to check whether your fridge is cold enough. Fresh items such as milk – the third most-wasted food in the UK after potatoes and bread – perish quickly if they are not stored at the correct temperature. The average UK fridge temperature is running at 6.6C when it should be below 5C, according to the charity. A fridge thermometer can be picked up for less than £5 in shops including Wilko and Currys, and could prove a good investment.

Love Food Hate Waste also has a useful section that explains how to adjust your fridge's temperature.

A recent consumer poll conducted for Sainsbury's revealed one in five consumers said the reason they waste so much food is they "don't know what to cook". The supermarket's latest marketing push highlights homemade soup as a low-cost nutritious meal that is a good way to use up veg and leftovers that would otherwise go to waste.

"Do a little bit of planning," White suggests. "Write a shopping list or use your phone to take a picture of what is in your fridge or cupboards, we call them a 'shelfie', so you don't buy a double of something you've already got.

"Meal planning is not for everyone but if it appeals to you, especially with a focus on saving money, I can really recommend it."

At the same time, it is worth remembering plans can change during a busy week. "You're not going to cook from scratch seven days a week," she says. "Maybe just plan for five and give yourself the opportunity to have a takeaway or meal out, or just get something out of the freezer."

Know when to throw it out

An important thing to get a handle on is the difference between the use-by and best-before dates on food packaging. That way you can avoid food poisoning and jettisoning products that are still OK to eat.

A use-by date is about safety, says the Food Standards Agency. You can eat food until and on the use-by date but not afterwards as it could be unsafe to consume, even if it has been stored correctly and looks and smells fine.

A best-before date is an indicator of quality rather than safety. Food is safe to eat after that date but its flavour and texture may not be as good.

A 2011 survey by Wrap found a high level of understanding about date labels among consumers. However, a sizeable minority incorrectly associated a best-before date with safety.

This confusion is “100%” contributing to food waste, says Jamie Crummie, a co-founder of the food waste app Too Good to Go. Its more recent poll found 45% of UK adults were confused about the meaning of best before. The decision by food companies to carry use-by dates on products better suited to best before is also contributing to waste, he says.

That products have not been used in time is the main reason given for food waste in the home and is behind about 40% of the total. A third of the time, this “not-used-in-time” decision is based on the date label and these actions add up to about 15% of food waste.

Companies that can help

Too Good to Go is one of a growing band of companies focused on tackling the huge quantities of food waste generated in and out of the home. The company allows people to buy discounted food from restaurants and shops, while other services, such as Olio, help people rehome unwanted food from their fridge.

By sharing food waste tips and advice with its 7.5 million users, Too Good To Go aims to educate people around the “big picture”, Crummie says. Its “look, smell, taste, don’t waste” campaign, which seeks to improve understanding of date labels, has so far enlisted 40 brands, including big names such as Nestlé, Danone and Onken.

The companies have switched from use-by to best-before dates on products, including milk, yoghurt and cheese. Prompts on the packaging also encourage consumers to use their senses to gauge edibility.

Milk is wasted on a vast scale, with more than 490m pints poured down the kitchen sink every year. About 85m of those pints are dumped because consumers are adhering to the use-by date even though the milk may still be

good. Morrisons recently announced its plan to replace the use-by date on its bottles with a best-before one. Arla, the dairy co-operative behind the Cravendale brand, made the same switch in 2019.

If you find yourself regularly pouring milk down the sink at home, it might be time to have a rethink, White says, as we often buy a certain quantity out of habit. She suggests buying smaller containers and, if you are worried about being caught out, to keep one in the freezer as a backup.

“If you understand what a date label is telling you, you can make better decisions in the home because you will be able to use up more of the food you buy,” she adds. “I want food to go into bellies not bins.”

The detail behind use-by and best-before dates

Use-by dates are about safety. They are applied to food that goes off quickly and could cause food poisoning after a short period of time, such as fresh fish or ready-to-eat salads. The food will be unsafe to consume after the date. The product’s life can be extended by freezing, although you need to do this before the use-by date expires.

Best-before dates, sometimes shown as BBE (best before end) are about quality not safety. The food will be safe to consume after this date but may not be at its best: it may lose flavour or go stale. These appear on a wide range of products including frozen, dried and tinned foods.

Whether a food business applies a use-by or best-before date depends on factors such as the degree of processing and the microbiological risk associated with the product, as well as anticipating how it might be used and stored at home.

Ten most wasted food and drink items in UK homes

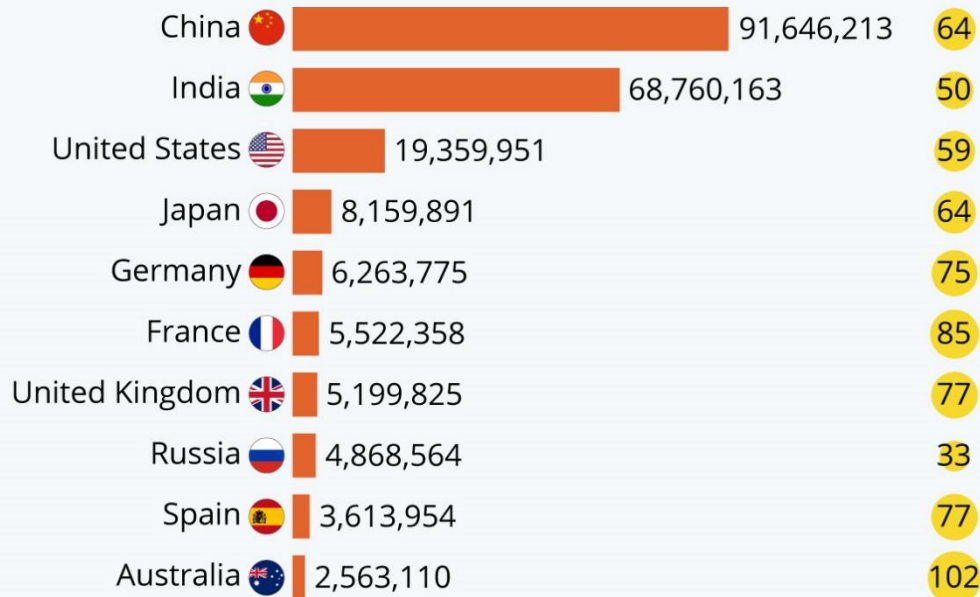
Potatoes (fresh), Bread, Milk, Meals (homemade and pre-prepared), Fizzy drinks, Fruit juice and smoothies, Pork, ham and bacon, Poultry (chicken, turkey and duck), Carrots (fresh), Potatoes (processed)

The Enormous Scale of Global Food Waste

Total annual household food waste produced in selected countries*



- Total food waste per year (tonnes)
- Estimated food waste per capita (kg)



* UNEP estimates with high or medium confidence
Source: UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2021



statista

What you should be able to write about for your class paper:

- Be able to show that food waste is a problem with certain facts, numbers and examples.
- What is the difference between the “use-by” date and the “best before” date?
- What can you do to reduce food waste?

Mention at least 3 different strategies.

What is a food carbon footprint?

www.bbcgoodfood.com

The phrase 'carbon footprint' is something we've all heard of, but few people know exactly what it means. So, let's be clear from the start – a carbon footprint is the total climate impact of an activity or item: from its creation, transportation and use to its destruction or wastage.

Most of the time, a carbon footprint refers to the amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) that something creates, mainly carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane and nitrous oxide. These gases can trap heat in our atmosphere, which causes global warming.

Everything has a carbon footprint; the food you eat, the gadgets you use, the clothes you wear, and you yourself. Companies, cities and countries also have a carbon footprint, as do specific activities such as flying and driving.

In the EU, food is the second largest contributor to our individual carbon footprints. This is caused by various stages in the life cycle of foodstuffs:

- **Production** – the fertilisers, pesticides, animal feed, water and other materials (like electricity) used to grow or raise food
- **Processing** – harvesting crops and dispatching animals, or the energy used in creating secondary foods such as dairy products
- **Transportation** – this includes from farms to processing plants, then on to retail units and finally from the shops to your home
- **Storage and cooking** – the electricity involved in refrigerating and then cooking the food you've bought
- **Waste** – this is both the food you throw away and unsold food disposed of by retailers

Each stage will have a different impact on a food's carbon footprint. For example, buying beef produced in the UK rather than Argentina will reduce transport emissions, but red meat is still a major contributor to climate change. If you end up throwing that beef away, either as leftovers or because it was out of date, it will generate even more GHG as it breaks down.

By learning which foods have the largest and smallest carbon footprints, you can help reduce your individual carbon footprint overall.

Which foods have the greatest carbon footprint?

An overwhelming amount of evidence now shows that beef and animal products like dairy generate the largest amount of food-related GHG. Lamb is another culprit. This is because both cows and sheep need a lot of animal feed, plus they experience ‘enteric fermentation’ – their stomachs break down food to produce methane.

Foods with the lowest GHG emissions are plants and vegetables but how these crops are produced can create a huge variation in their carbon footprint. Buying strawberries from a local pick-your-own farm shop in summer will have very low emissions – and so a smaller carbon footprint – but buying out-of-season strawberries grown in UK hothouses will have a larger carbon footprint due to the energy and fertilisers needed to produce them.

Reduce your food carbon footprint

There are plenty of ways to reduce your food carbon footprint, from switching to a plant-based diet (but looking at how and where those plants are grown) to eating your leftovers or prioritising seasonally grown produce.

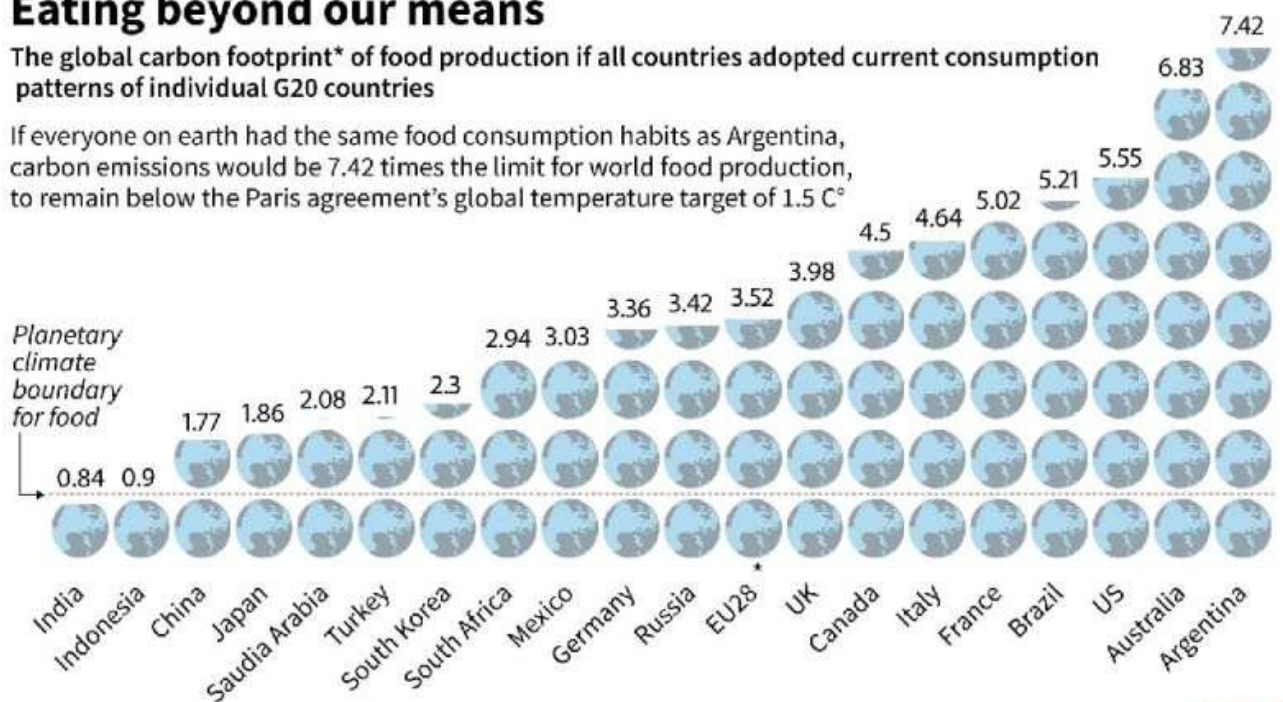
You can also make more environmentally friendly food choices, thanks to a growing number of carbon labels on the front of packaging; research now shows that these labels help shoppers make better, low-carbon decisions. In 2020, Quorn became the first major brand to introduce carbon labelling in the UK, while the manufacturers behind brands including Bisto and KitKat are currently considering how to add carbon footprints to their packaging.

Until then, ask yourself where your food comes from and what processes were involved in producing it. The answer could cut your carbon footprint and help protect our planet.

Eating beyond our means

The global carbon footprint* of food production if all countries adopted current consumption patterns of individual G20 countries

If everyone on earth had the same food consumption habits as Argentina, carbon emissions would be 7.42 times the limit for world food production, to remain below the Paris agreement's global temperature target of 1.5 C°



Source: EAT *before the UK left EU



What you should be able to write about for your class paper:

- Be able to define the term “carbon footprint”.
- Be able to explain why food has a carbon footprint by giving minimum 4 clear examples.
- What can you do to reduce your food carbon footprint?

Why we need to talk about global hunger and obesity

www.news.trust.org

For every undernourished person there are now two obese or overweight people in the world

“I’m hungry...” is a phrase I hear frequently when raising four active kids. Often between lunch and dinner they want a whole other meal. Then, as they stand with the fridge or cupboard wide open, staring at sufficient choices of food, I hear, “There’s nothing to eat!”

This is not real, true hunger. It’s a learned behaviour after living a privileged life. They are hungry in their understanding of ‘I want food’, but it’s completely different from real ‘hunger’ as felt by over 800 million people who go to bed truly hungry each night. True hunger equates to malnutrition whereby a person does not consume enough nutrients to lead a healthy life.

For the first time in a decade, we saw a global rise in the number of hungry people in 2017. At the same time, there was a continued rise in obesity. On the surface, this seems a highly unusual global phenomenon and begs the question: are the two related?

Statistically, there are approximately two obese people for every one hungry person. Malnutrition in all of its forms- undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight/obesity- is increasing. The recently released Global Nutrition Report 2017 showed that 88% of countries face a serious burden of either two or three forms of malnutrition namely undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency or overweight/ obesity. There is also evidence which suggests that people who experience undernutrition as children are more likely to be overweight as adults. This double and even triple burden is making the work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) even more challenging.

This begs the questions: Why do we see continued hunger and a concurrent rise in people eating too much, and the wrong types of foods?

Our planet produces more than enough food to feed everyone and has for a number of years. However, food is unequally distributed and far too much is wasted. Some have access to much, while others not enough. The increased production of cheaper, produced food has made food more accessible to those

that would otherwise be without as well as resulted in people consuming the wrong type of food. These foods, while not bad in and of themselves as occasional foods, are often higher in salt, sugar and saturated fats, while their nutrition content is questionable.

While in some places this phenomenon, coupled with globalisation, has resulted in a reduction in the number of hungry or malnourished people, it has also contributed to a significant jump in the number of overweight and obese children.

As a parent raising their kids in the UK, this is a major concern for me. It is so convenient and affordable to fill my kids up with processed foods that they love to inhale, rather than take the extra moments to prepare local produce. Having seen first-hand the global effects of a poor diet, we are actively trying to raise children that understand a balanced diet. Eat seasonal, local food that looks the same as when it was grown or harvested. Prepare food from scratch. Know and understand the ingredients. Most importantly, only consume what you need, not necessarily what you might want. This task is becoming harder and harder.

This paradox is not easily addressed but the future health of our planet and its population is at stake. Changes need to be carried out from household to production level and involve all of the supply chains in between. The co-existence of double and triple burdens of malnutrition calls for integrated action that tackles malnutrition in all its forms: from the causes of obesity to the causes of wasting and stunting. It requires all countries to evaluate and restructure their food systems in their entirety. Laws around food-marketing, educating consumers and ethical supply chains are just a few areas that must be part of the food discussion in order to build a sustainable, equitable food future for everyone.

What you should be able to write about for your class paper:

- **What's the difference between being hungry and true hunger?**
- **What is the big paradox which is described in the text? Explain it.**
- **What are solutions to the problems addressed in the text?**