

## KNIVETON PARISH COUNCIL

### MINIMISATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE

#### SIMPLE WAYS TO EAT MORE SUSTAINABLY

All foods have an environmental impact, but some are worse than others. Animal products have a higher carbon footprint than plant foods. For example, producing a kilo of beef creates 59.6kg of greenhouse gases (GHG), while peas and nuts create less than 1kg of GHG per kilo. While the ways animals are farmed also affects their carbon emissions, a large majority of the emissions from cows is down to the methane that the animals expel from their digestive systems. Other contributors to GHG emissions are fertilisers used on the land for grazing, growing animal feed and the breakdown of animal manure and urine.

Greenhouse gases such as methane, nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide cause problems as they allow heat to pass into the earth's atmosphere but prevent it from leaving, which causes rising temperatures. The effects of this include droughts, rising sea levels and flooding.

Can you just swap beef for chicken? This would just swap one problem for another. Most chickens are reared intensively and are fed on soya, the global demand for which has driven deforestation – impacting the environment and biodiversity. And it's argued that the soya fed to chickens could be eaten by humans, whereas cows and sheep convert food that humans can't eat (grass) into nutrient-dense food that we can (beef, lamb and milk). Instead of getting caught up in which meat to eat or avoid, reduce your intake of all meat as much as you can. Less, but better-quality meat and more emphasis on plant foods (fruit, veg, nuts, pulses and grains) is considered a better approach. Another way to reduce the carbon footprint of your diet is to reduce the amount of dairy you consume. Dairy cattle produce milk over their lifetime and beef when they're slaughtered, which is why the carbon emissions from beef from a dairy herd are lower than beef from a beef herd, but that doesn't stop dairy products – cheese, in particular – from being a high-impact food. Milk has a high water content, so carbon emissions are lower than for cheese – this is because it takes 8-10kg of milk to make 1kg of cheese. So cutting down on milk by-products such as cheese and yoghurt is likely to have more impact.

Switching to a plant-based milk substitute isn't necessarily better. While almond milk has a low carbon footprint, its water footprint is very high and also takes its toll on the environment. It takes 15 gallons of water to grow just 16 almonds. Plant milks don't contain the same nutrients as dairy milks, either. Fortification can add vitamins and minerals, but they still contain less energy and, apart from soya milk, less protein.

Will cutting down on meat and dairy mean missing vital nutrients? It's perfectly possible to get enough protein from a well-balanced vegetarian diet, and indeed eating more plant-based foods is recommended as part of a healthy diet. Good plant sources of protein include beans, lentils and pulses, quinoa, nuts and seeds.

Other ways to make your diet more sustainable:

**Stop wasting food.** Throwing food out doesn't just waste the food itself, but all the resources that have gone into making it, as well as the emissions created when it rots. Some 70% of food waste comes from households and this is linked to more than 20 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. If everyone in the UK stopped throwing away food for just one day it would have the same environmental impact as taking 14,000 cars off the road for a whole year.

Tips to reduce food waste:

- write a meal plan for the week and only buy what you need
- understand the difference between 'use-by' and 'best-before' dates – 'use by' is about safety and food isn't safe to eat after this date. 'Best before' is about quality and foods are perfectly safe to eat after this date, they just might not taste as good
- check your fridge is at the correct temperature: between 0 and 5°C.
- keep your fruit and veg in the fridge as it will last longer (apart from potatoes, onions, bananas and pineapple)
- keep bagged salad and spinach leaves fresher by putting a piece of kitchen towel in the bag – it will stop the leaves going slimy
- use your leftovers for meals the following day or freeze them for future meals. Freeze what you won't use in time. Food doesn't need to be frozen on the day of purchase and is fine to freeze up to the use-by date. Most foods can be frozen – bread (slice it first), cheese and even eggs once they've been cracked and beaten.

If you do have food waste, recycle it. think about those tea bags, coffee grounds, veg peelings, bones and eggshells. Use the council's food waste collection service. To prevent maggots, use compostable bags, securely tie bags and keep bins lids closed. To minimise odours, allow food to cool before putting it in your caddy, squeeze excess liquid out of food and teabags, and store bins out of direct sunlight as heat and moisture encourage decomposition. Also, line your caddy with newspaper to soak up any 'bin juices', and clean it regularly.

**Avoid foods that are air-freighted** The impact of transport is relatively small for most foods apart from those transported by air – usually highly perishable fruit and veg, including strawberries, blueberries, asparagus and green beans. These emit 50 to 100 times more GHG and have far more impact than food travelling by sea, such as apples, oranges and bananas. Try to eat locally produced seasonal fruit and veg where you can – Kniveton now has its own Farm Shop.

And remember that you can reduce the packaging waste of foods by using Refills on the Road on most Thursday mornings 10 – 12 noon outside the Kniveton Red Lion.