



If you want to change the world, Veganism is just the beginning



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2018 saw the rise in veganism hit exponential territory, with sign-ups to the introductory Veganuary jumping from 59,500 in 2017 to 168,000 this year, an increase of over 280% (1)—and that’s just those who actually signed up online.

And when you take a closer look into the meat and dairy industry, it’s little wonder so many people are making the switch...

According to a paper (2) in the journal *Science*, animal farming takes up a whopping 83% of agricultural land, while only providing a mere 18% of our calories. Further, the meat and dairy industry is responsible for 60% of agriculture’s greenhouse gas emissions (3). In terms of all contributors to climate change, *The New York Times* (4) says “worldwide, livestock accounts for between 14.5 percent and 18 percent of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions”.

Even more shocking is the fact that, according to George Monbiot of *The Guardian* newspaper (5), 93% of the soya we consume is actually in meat, dairy, fish and eggs—this being the typical feed—but since most of this is lost in conversion, you’d actually get the same amount of protein with much less crop by just eating the soya directly. This is particularly poignant when you consider the damage and destruction caused just to grow such massive amounts of soya.

Then there's the animal cruelty aspect. Many will remember the awful news of the 5,500 pigs and 3.4 million chickens abandoned and left to drown in the flooding caused by hurricane Florence in North Carolina in September—so the farmers could claim the insurance, reports Plant-Based News (6).

And this is by no means an isolated incident. Animal cruelty in the industry abounds, with regular release of footage showing farmhands beating and kicking pigs and sheep, the terrible conditions of so-called 'free range' hens cramped so close together into huge, dark sheds that they can barely move, tripping over the corpses of their fellow detainees, and, of course, the heartbreaking practice of separating days old calves from their bawling mothers (if not shot at birth) and shipping them abroad to support the dairy industry, as reported in the BBC's documentary, *The Dark Side of Dairy* (7).

No wonder George Monbiot claims the best way to save the planet is to drop meat and dairy.

So we 'go vegan'. And we feel good about that, for a while. It's certainly a fantastic way to 'do your bit', as they say. But once you've opened your eyes to the reality of the meat and dairy industry, there's one unsettling thought that begins to surface:

If animal agriculture can do so much harm to the environment and heartlessly inflict so much suffering to helpless creatures, why are we even doing it in the first place?

When you notice how adamant the meat and dairy industry is about the importance of their products in your diet (unfounded claims, many say (8)), and the almost childish court action taken against alternative products using the words 'milk' and 'meat', the only answer you will ever find to this question is: money.

With an industry value estimated in the trillions of dollars, agriculture is big business. And money makes the world go round.

So then the question becomes: "If we can do all that just for profit, what other horrors are we doing just for profit?"

And that is the ultimate Pandora's Box. Open it and 'connecting the dots' becomes the biggest understatement of the century as you suddenly realise that EVERYTHING revolves around profit, with the health and well-being of people, communities and the planet coming a very distant second place.

You only have to scrape the surface of the pharmaceutical industry, for example, to see how warped our pursuit of profit has become, with people in 1st world countries dying because they can't afford insulin or a trip to the dentist.

Dig a little deeper and you also realise that pretty much every problem we currently face as a species—environmental destruction, poverty, unemployment, homelessness, crime, war—has its roots in the profit system.

This is the torture of the modern vegan.

Committing ourselves to a completely different lifestyle with the idea of changing the world is a great start, but that's all it is: a start.

Until we address that unsettling feeling deep inside us all and actually become aware of the root cause of today's seemingly unstoppable path to destruction, our vegan efforts will only ever remain a drop in the ever-deepening ocean.

So what can we do about it?

How can we REALLY change the world?

(originally published on LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/you-want-change-world-veganism-just-beginning-sarah-mciver/>)

(1) <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/apr/01/vegans-are-coming-millennials-health-climate-change-animal-welfare>

(2) <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/360/6392/987>

(3)

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/avoiding-meat-and-dairy-is-single-biggest-way-to-reduce-your-impact-on-earth>

(4) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/25/climate/cows-global-warming.html>

(5)

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/08/save-planet-meat-dairy-livestock-food-free-range-steak>

(6) <https://www.plantbasednews.org/post/animal-left-drown-farmers-claim-insurance>

(7) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-45440535>

(8) <https://www.plantbasednews.org/post/are-meat-and-dairy-really-good-for-you>