

How Sustainable is Veganism?

What Is Veganism?

Veganism is a diet and lifestyle that excludes animal products and aims to limit the suffering of animals as much as possible.

Meat-Based Diet

Pros:

Eating meat and dairy provides the necessary nutrients humans need to survive
Meat and dairy options are more accessible

Cons:

24% of greenhouse gas emissions come from raising livestock
Animal waste contaminates fresh water sources and the environment surrounding grazing fields
Animal agriculture is a major contributor to deforestation; responsible for 91% of destruction in the Amazon Rainforest

Vegan Diet

Pros:

Vegans are less likely to be obese and more likely to be healthier than meat-eaters
Vegan dietary choices create new economic opportunities (like meat alternatives)
Vegans are less prone to heart disease and high blood pressure

Cons:

It is difficult for vegans to get the necessary amount of nutrients from their diet (like protein and calcium)
A vegan diet can be expensive and more difficult for poorer communities to access

Sustainability of Veganism

Researchers found that cutting meat and dairy products from one's diet can reduce their carbon footprint up to 73%. However, the growth and transport of fruits and vegetables also contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, albeit at a lower extent. For example, artificial fertilizers account for 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Despite this, a plant-based or vegan diet is considerably more sustainable for the environment than a meat-based diet.

Conclusion

The vegan diet is overall more sustainable than a typical omnivore's diet. Research shows that reducing meat and dairy consumption is the best way to live more sustainably and reduce your impact on the environment.

Political Implications

Local: Changes in consumer diets creates a domino effect. Corporations are adapting to a changing consumer culture, which includes the vegan lifestyle. Politicians listen to corporations and create more sustainable policies, like tax subsidies for meat and dairy alternatives.

Global: Researchers in Switzerland found that vegans are more politically active than meat-eaters and want to produce large societal change. Additionally, many vegans promote animal rights and environmentalism.



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