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Dr. Oppenlander explains how what we choose to eat is destroying our planet. *Comfortably Unaware* is a dire message of how we need to become aware of the impact our food choices have throughout the world and on our future.

COP 19 and Climate Change: The Path to Resolution



The Conference

On November 11th, world leaders in business, industry, and NGOs will join representatives from nearly 200 countries to convene in Warsaw, Poland, for the nineteenth annual Conference of the Parties (COP 19) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change—an international environmental treaty established in 1994 to address the challenges of a warming planet.

The Sustainable Innovation Forum will be occurring alongside COP 19, featuring similar representation, with the objective of fostering innovative thinking and actions to transform energy policy and supply (energy security).

What was concerning to a few researchers in the 1980s, leading to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, is generally widely accepted today — that global warming and climate change are very real, they are worsening, and they will exacerbate severe weather patterns, threaten food security, damage the health of our oceans, and detrimentally effect many lives. Developing

countries already struggling with hunger, poverty, loss of productive topsoil, and human sickness will be particularly hard hit. Importantly, although natural sources of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions do exist, humans are to blame for the degree of climate change we are currently experiencing, because it is largely a byproduct of our actions—certain habits that have resulted in excessive GHGs being increasingly emitted into our atmosphere over the past century. Unfortunately, previous conferences of this type have ended in lack of formal agreement and have missed targets for change. The two largest emitters in the world, China and the U.S., don't even participate.



Land stripped from over-grazing cattle.

Urgency

Every aspect of global depletion has a timeline. It's not really a question of if we will run out of certain vital resources or environment that sustains us... it's *WHEN*. Perhaps the most critical timeline we face, regarding our survival as a species, is that of climate change. We have only a three- to four-year window of time from now to drastically reduce GHGs, or we will be thrust into irreversible warming of our planet. Most experts agree that if our planet's temperature increases just 2 degrees Centigrade from pre-industrial levels, there will be catastrophic effects — complete loss of island countries, as well as severe droughts, flooding, and storms, just for starters. If some of this sounds familiar, it's because we are already halfway to that two-degree

mark, and we're most likely careening toward a 3.6- to 5.3-degree Centigrade rise in average temperature by the end of this century. Some researchers believe that enough GHGs have already been emitted to cause atmospheric changes that will force us into continued short-term warming, regardless of a reduction in emissions.

In fact, the International Energy Agency has been quite clear about the window of opportunity for us to limit global warming, and that window closes at the end of year 2017 (IEA).



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Wrong Focus

To date, the attention at the previous eighteen COP conferences and all other high-level climate change meetings has been on reducing the burning of fossil fuels by the energy sector, which accounts for roughly 53 percent of all GHGs. (Energy accounts for 66 percent of global GHGs, and 80 percent of all energy consumption derives from fossil fuel). Many experts suggest elimination of coal, due to its lack of efficiency and large proportion of GHG contribution.

In 2006, a now widely cited U.N. study shocked the world by reporting that the livestock industry accounted for 18 percent of all human-induced GHG. Since that time, other researchers have found that this figure may be in excess of 51 percent, which would make it by far the most significant global contributor to climate change. This disparity (18 vs. 51 percent) was a result of at least three factors: underreporting and omission of key data, use of outdated figures, and likely editorial conceptual bias of that 2006 U.N. report (see Goodland & Anhang). Note that neither report (U.N. nor Goodland &

Anhang) accounted for the additional GHG and ecological damage contributed by the fishing industry — the fossil fuel used by fishing fleets, as well as the transportation, refrigeration, processing, and packaging of marine life that is extracted from our oceans or raised in aquaculture operations.

In or out of COP conventions, discussions of our climate change plight typically end up sooner or later referencing one of two figures related to the maximum amount of GHG our atmosphere can accept before catastrophic effects mount:

- The first figure, 350, refers to the parts per million density threshold of carbon-equivalent GHGs.
- The second figure, 565, refers to the maximum total number of gigatons (Gt) of GHGs our atmosphere is able to absorb.

Livestock have been shown to produce up to 32 Gt per year (from methane and CO₂ production, deforestation, etc.). So, it is possible that we could exceed our atmospheric maximum of 565 Gt by the year 2030, simply from the continued production and consumption of livestock — ***without the energy sector or any fossil fuel consumption (gas, oil, or coal) even factored into the equation.***

While attention should surely be given to the energy, industry, and transportation sectors, certainly animal agriculture demands equal time in any COP or similar climate change conference. BP, Shell, and Exxon are significant players in our climate change saga, but so is every business associated with the meat, dairy, and fishing industries as well as the consumers who eat their products. And it is certainly easier for consumers to reach for plant-based food items than it is for them to go off the grid with their electrical needs or drive a wind-powered car.

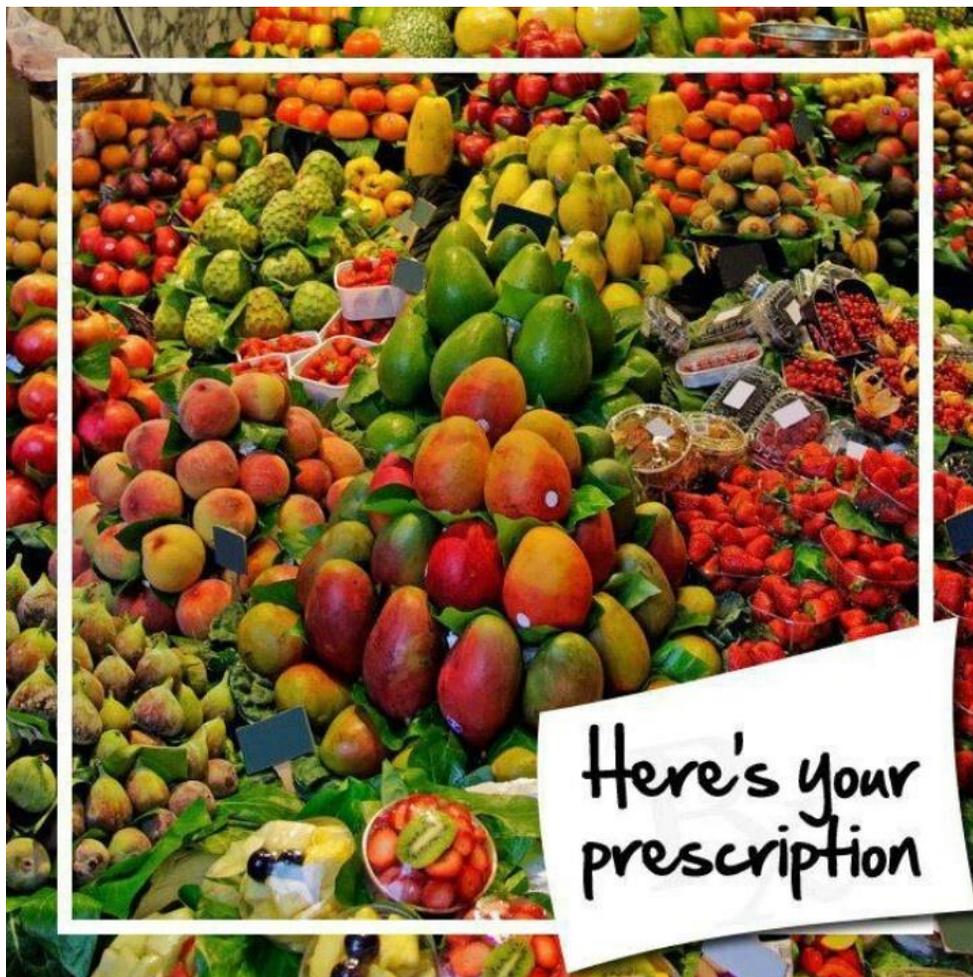


Mitigation vs. Adaptation

Unable to construct a workable legal framework by which all countries are accountable, and faced with what they now see as worsening climate change inevitability, the delegates at Doha, Qatar (COP 18) turned to discussions of methods for “adapting” to climate change, rather than mitigating it.

Discussions about the role of agriculture were conveniently postponed, as had occurred at all prior COP conventions, so frank dialogue addressing the elephant in the room — raising and eating animals — remains quite remote. The participants at recent COP conventions have had no difficulty calling for the elimination of coal and replacement of fossil fuels by alternative energy sources such as wind and solar. It’s time they consider calling for the same measures with animal products and concomitant agriculture industries.

Indeed, the solution to the climate change caused by at least one of the three largest emitters of anthropogenic GHGs can be readily found by any of the high-level COP 19 attendees — ***they simply need to glance down at what’s on their dinner plates!***



Prescription for Change

When looking at strategies for solving our increasing anthropogenic GHG-climate challenge, I believe we are faced with adopting one of two approaches here in the United States, which could then serve as an example for the rest of the world.

The first approach is to reduce our dependency on fossil fuel and fund research on alternative technologies, which is already underway. However, building renewable energy infrastructure such as solar and wind generators across our country to reduce climate change, although a good idea, is projected to take at least 20 more years and \$18 trillion to develop. We don't have 20 years, and we certainly don't have \$18 trillion.

So another solution to climate change would be to stop eating animals — today. It doesn't have to take 20 years. And instead of \$18 trillion, it costs nothing.

Replacement of all animal-based food products with plant-based alternatives is the clear immediate prescription for mitigating climate change.

Oh, and by doing so, we will also minimize our global footprint, essentially reducing nearly all other aspects of global depletion—land use inefficiencies and freshwater scarcity, damage to our oceans and loss of rainforests, rapid extinction of other species, world hunger, and escalation of chronic disease in humans.

Problems solved.



About Richard Oppenlander

Dr. Oppenlander has devoted his life to improving the health of our planet. Through literary work or in person, he brings an eclectic combination of experiences regarding this topic spanning the past 40 years. His medical

research during the 1970's gave way to clinical experiences over the years treating thousands of patients, many of those with nutritional and dietary issues. Since 1976, he has extensively studied the effect our food choices have on our health and the immense impact those choices have on our environment. Dr. Oppenlander has given hundreds of lectures, presentations, and open discussions on this topic. He is also president and founder of a sustainable organic food production business. He has been a featured guest appearing on radio shows, in newspapers and magazines. With *Comfortably Unaware* as well as with his speaking engagements, Dr. Oppenlander addresses the fact that our current choices of foods are causing Global Depletion-the loss of our land, water, air/atmosphere, food supply, biodiversity, energy resources, and our own health. In compelling fashion, he reveals serious inefficiencies and unsustainable practices in our current food production systems and explores unique solutions. Along the way, Dr. Oppenlander challenges audiences with new insights regarding how this has happened- exposing our cultural, social, educational, governmental and even media influences. [VIDEO HERE](#)

[Source: Dr. Richard Oppenlander](#)

Eugene Veg Education Network (EVEN)

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Eugene Veg Education Network

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The **Eugene Veg Education Network (EVEN)** is an **official 501(c)(3)** non-profit based in Eugene serving as a resource for those seeking information on a **healthful, vegan lifestyle**. EVEN's emphasis is one of **non-violence, compassion and sustainability**. Focus is on the **interconnectedness of all life** and how a plant-based diet benefits the earth, non-human animals, and the individual. **EVEN's Mission Statement is to inform, educate & encourage our members**--- as well as the larger community ---by providing pertinent information on veganism and its positive impact on the health of the planet and all its inhabitants. www.eugeneveg.org

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