

Going vegan is the green ideal



Pioneer minister and vegan **Nicky Pybus** urges Christians to take action on climate change

MOST of us are painfully aware of the negative impact of plastic pollution on the environment. We also know that, in order to save the planet, we need to cut our carbon emissions, save water, buy energy saving light-bulbs, reduce, reuse, recycle – the list goes on.

All of these actions are good and should of course be encouraged, but how many of us are aware that by far the biggest cause of climate change today is the meat and dairy industry? Here are just a few of the uncomfortable facts:

- Animal agriculture is responsible for 51 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions – far more than the 13 per cent caused by the entire transportation industry put together.
- Animal agriculture is the leading cause of mass deforestation – 136 million acres of rainforest have been cleared for animal agriculture, compared with 26 million acres for palm oil.
- The meat and dairy industry uses a third of the earth’s entire fresh water supply – growing feed for livestock means that just one hamburger requires 660 gallons of water to produce.
- Animal agriculture is the leading cause of water

pollution, ocean dead zones and species extinction. Scientists predict that if current trends continue, there will be no fish left by 2048.

It’s a pretty bleak picture. And with 7.6 billion people currently living on the earth, with an average of 250 babies being born every minute, this ever-increasing demand on the earth’s finite resources is completely unsustainable.

How can we safeguard the earth for our children’s sake?

So what is our response as Christians – as stewards of the earth that God created? We can no longer choose to bury our heads in the sand and hope that the whole situation goes away somehow or that a more convenient solution to the environmental crisis arises.

What does the Lord require of us? “To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with (our) God” (Micah 6:8). How can we demonstrate justice in a world of inequality, where the impact of climate change will be felt the most by those countries that are

the least responsible for it? How can we demonstrate compassion and kindness to the earth and safeguard its future for the sake of our children and the generations to come?

Here are two simple steps I would urge you to consider in response:

1. Reduce your consumption of animal products, such as meat, fish, dairy and eggs, by consuming more plant-based foods that are less resource-intensive. Why not challenge yourself to go vegetarian for a month, or even vegan, and see what happens?
2. If you do choose to continue to eat animal products, make sure you source them from local farms or fisheries where you can be confident the animals are able to flourish in a good life as creatures of God.

I went vegan myself two years ago after watching a compelling documentary called ‘Cow-spiracy’ – and I’ve never felt healthier! It was also suggested by environmental campaigner Ruth Valerio at our Diocesan Conference in September.

Further reading on Biblical teaching on protecting animals and nature can be found at: www.humanesociety.org.