



## 10 Minutes For The Planet

Global Consumerism and Our Planet – Part 3

### The Effects of Food Production on the Environment ©

by Pierre Vercueil

Vocabulary & pronunciation study by Catherine Balter Kendall ©

Words are explained alongside the text

Stressed syllables are underlined and in bold\*

Hi there and welcome back to our **weekly environmental series** here on EnglishWaves, Ten **Minutes** for the Planet. Today we'll consider the **global food industry**, implicating a very large group of people: everyone on the planet. People can survive without many things but we cannot survive without food, the **production** of which has become a **serious environmental concern**. The world's **rapidly growing population** requires more and more food, which in turn is **producing** alarming consequences for our environment. Of particular **concern** is meat production for which demand continues to be explosive. The meat industry is a primary contributor to **annual carbon emissions** globally as **modern** practices of **animal raising** directly **contribute** to water and air **pollution** and increase carbon dioxide emissions.

Consider the following:

- **Roughly** a third of the planet's **landmass** is dedicated to growing **livestock**, and in the **United** States alone about 10 billion land animals are raised for dairy, meat, and eggs each year;
- Factory farming **accounts for** 37% of methane CH4 emissions, which has more than 20 times the **global warming potential** of CO2;
- Globally, deforestation for animal **grazing** and **feed crops** is estimated to emit 2.4 billion tons of CO2 every year.

The meat industry is estimated to be responsible for about 9% of **total carbon dioxide emissions**. But **over and above** carbon emissions, animal **husbandry** (the management and

**concern** (n.) worry, preoccupation

**animal raising** (n.n.) animal farming

**roughly** (adj.) approximately

**landmass** (n.) large area of land, continent

**livestock** (n.) animals

**to account for** (vb.) to represent, to make up

**grazing** (n.) feeding on grass

**feed crops** (n.n.) vegetables or cereals for animal consumption

dairy (n.) food products made from milk

**over and above** (exp.) in addition to

Note the following noun phrases:

**weekly environmental series**

(adj.adj.n.), **global food industry**

(adj.n.n.), **serious environmental**

**concern** (adj.adj.n.), **rapidly**

**growing population** (adv.adj.n.),

**annual carbon emissions**

(adj.n.n.), **global warming**

**potential** (adj.adj.n.) **total carbon**

**dioxide emissions** (adj.n.n.n.)

care of farm animals by **humans**) poses a serious **threat** to local ecosystems and biodiversity **due** to the **use** of the land for grazing and animal feed production. As a **result**, **wildlife species struggle** with **lack** of habitat, while some are even **threatened** with extinction.

Now the logical question is, when did our appetite for meat get so big? It wasn't so long ago that meat was considered quite the **luxury, unaffordable** to most. In economic theory, food such as meat is referred to as a 'normal good', meaning that as people's incomes rise they wish to **consume** more of it. This is exactly what's taken place: rising income levels over the past few decades have produced an exponential increase in demand for meat. Just like the fast fashion **industry** that has made the latest trends in clothing available at low prices, the fast food industry has made frequent meat **consumption** a possibility for those who might otherwise not be able **to afford** it.

You probably wouldn't think of eating a Big Mac as contributing to your **carbon footprint** but the intensive resources required to make just a **standard** cheeseburger, from growing the wheat to make the **buns** to feeding the cattle, and eventually their **slaughter**, and even the energy required **to pickle** the cucumbers, all converts to a **staggering** 1 – 3.5 kg of carbon emitted into the atmosphere. Fast food also requires a massive amount of packaging. From the **wrappers** and **straws** to the boxes and bags, fast food packaging accounts for an estimated 40% of all **litter** with Styrofoam being the most common **food waste**. What's more, Styrofoam takes an unbelievable 900 years **to breakdown** in **landfill**!

Does all this mean that meat **should** not be part of our diet? No, not likely. However, it does imply that we need to think about where the food on our plate comes from, and how **sustainable** our diets are in the long run. In other words, 8 billion people eating meat as part of their everyday breakfast, lunch, and dinner does not **bode well** for our continued effort **to stem the tide** of rising global **temperatures**.

Join us again next time when we continue our look at global consumerism, its different forms, and what it means for our planet.

**threat** (n.) danger

**wildlife species** (n.n.) types of animals and plants

**to struggle** (vb.) to fight to survive

**lack** (n.) shortage, not enough

**to threaten** (vb.) to endanger

**unaffordable** (adj.) to expensive to be able to buy

**to afford** (vb.) to have the means to buy

**carbon footprint** (exp.) the effect on the environment from the amount of carbon produced

**bun** (n.) bread roll

**slaughter** (n.) killing

**to pickle** (vb.) to preserve in vinegar

**staggering** (adj.) incredible, shocking

**wrapper** (n.) protective cover

**straw** (n.) tube used to drink through

**litter** (n.) rubbish, waste

**food waste** (n.n.) food not used, but thrown away

**to break down** (phrasal vb.) to decompose

**landfill** (n.) a large, deep hole where rubbish is disposed of

**sustainable** (adj.) able to continue without damaging the environment and using up too many natural resources

**to bode well** (exp.) to be a good sign for the future

**to stem the tide** (exp.) to stop sth that is on the increase from spreading

Stay **tuned** to Ten Minutes for the Planet on EnglishWaves.

**\*Tip!**

The letter “u” is sometimes pronounced like the word “you” and sometimes like the “u” in “cup”. (It has other pronunciations in combinations with other vowels).

In the following words it is pronounced like the word “you”:

population, producing, contribute, pollution, humans, due, use, consume, tuned.

In the following words it is pronounced as it is in the word “cup”:

production, husbandry, result, struggle, luxury, industry, consumption, buns.

The following words are frequently mispronounced. A guide to their pronunciation is given in brackets. Where there is a silent letter, it appears in brackets:

minutes (“utes” is pronounced like “its”), mode(r)n, roughly (“ough” like “uff” in “stuff”), united (“nit” is pronounced like “night”), threat (“eat” is pronounced like “et” in “pet”), luxury (“x” is pronounced “ksh”), standard (“dard” is pronounced “dud”), slaughter (rhymes with “daughter”), (w)rappers (same as “rappers”), shou(l)d, temperatures (“ture” is pronounced like “tch”)