

Only Remaining Pragmatic Way
to Reverse Climate Change



It's the Food!

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Abstract: Scientists have been predicting for decades that we are rapidly approaching a tipping point with regards to climate change—and most have suggested that we’ll reach that tipping point between 2017 and 2020, if we’ve not reached it already. Sadly, virtually all of the mainstream attention to this crucial problem has been focused on burning less fossil fuel. Yet we continue to burn ever-increasing amounts of fossil fuel each year—making zero real progress in the last few decades.

Meanwhile, virtually no attention has been given to the “elephant in the room” when it comes to climate change—our food choices in the 21st century. In this brief, I present the argument that not only can we change our eating habits much more quickly than we can substantially reduce the burning of fossil fuel, but we can get a much bigger bang for the buck by promoting a global shift in the direction of plant-based eating. In this brief, I explain exactly how we can make that happen.

A 12-point brief advocating a complete overhaul of the world’s feeding model

---J. Morris Hicks

“There seems to be only one remaining pragmatic way to reverse climate change before it’s too late — and that’s by taking quick and large-scale actions in food, agriculture, and forestry.”

-- Robert Goodland, World Bank Environmental Specialist for 23 years

1. The above quote came from Robert Goodland’s last public presentation in September of 2013, just three months prior to his death. Four years earlier, he and World Bank colleague, Jeff Anhang, published a 2009 *World Watch* paper estimating that at least 51% of human-induced greenhouse gas is attributable to livestock. At the time, they calculated that “replacing 25% of today’s livestock products with better alternatives could almost fully achieve the objective of the *Kyoto Protocol*.”

2. What about fossil fuels? Take a look at the first paragraph of that *World Watch* paper shown here:

“Whenever the causes of climate change are discussed, fossil fuels top the list. Oil, natural gas, and especially coal are indeed major sources of human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases (GHGs). But we believe that the life cycle and supply chain of domesticated animals raised for food have been vastly underestimated as a source of GHGs, and in fact account for at least half of all human-caused GHGs. If this argument is right, it implies that replacing livestock products with better alternatives would be the best strategy for reversing climate change. In fact, this approach would have far more rapid effects on GHG emissions and their atmospheric concentrations—and thus on the rate the climate is warming—than actions to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy.”

3. As we all know, the *Kyoto Protocol* has not yielded a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as intended. Indeed, global greenhouse gas emissions rose an astonishing 61% from 1990 to 2013. That is when Goodland and Anhang re-estimated what must be done to reverse climate change, stating, “Now almost 50% of today’s livestock products must be replaced with better alternatives by 2020 at the latest in order to achieve the objective of the *Kyoto Protocol* and avert catastrophic climate change. No other pragmatic worldwide action to reverse climate change has been proposed by anyone.”

4. April 2016. “CO₂ concentration leaps into uncharted territory—408 ppm.” According to NOAA, preliminary CO₂ data from Mauna Loa, Hawaii, for the week ending April 16, showed a concentration of

408.69 ppm. Not only are we now experiencing the highest levels of CO₂ in history, we have less than four years remaining until 2020, the deadline for reducing GHG emissions as reported by a Smithsonian paper in 2012. Time is running out. In 2009, when Goodland and Anhang proposed a 25% reduction of global livestock products, there were almost eleven years remaining before the 2020 deadline.

5. Since zero progress has been made to date, it will now take much more “livestock products replacement” than the 25% or 50% reductions as proposed by Goodland and Anhang in 2009 and 2013 respectively. Our goal now should be to convince the entire world to try to replace ALL livestock products with greener, plant-based alternatives as quickly as possible. We know that no matter what percentage reduction is targeted, there will be large numbers of people who will refuse to make *any* reductions. In order to account for that widespread non-compliance, we must aim even higher—and then work hard to hit a total reduction of over 80% before 2020. Most would say that such a goal would be impossible to achieve in less than four years. But I disagree. All we need is the right amount of committed leadership and funding as we begin working on the demand side of the equation when it comes to what people are eating.

6. The good news is that of all the primary drivers of climate change, our global feeding model is by far the quickest, easiest and cheapest one to change. Any meat-eating person in the world can stop eating all livestock products just as quickly as they would like—even overnight. The other primary drivers of climate change, like global transportation and power generation, will take many decades and many trillions of dollars to change. And in a world where we continue to add over 200,000 to our population every day and millions of people are buying cars for the first time every year, we may very well need 100 years or more before we can solve those two HUGE problems. Changing what we eat now may buy us enough time to solve those two problems in addition to stabilizing our population at a sustainable level.

7. More good news is that changing what we eat can be a huge \$ savings for everyone. Two reasons: It costs less to eat a plant-based diet AND many studies have shown that by eating mostly whole, plant-based foods, that we can reverse most chronic disease and, in so doing, reduce the cost of healthcare by as much as 80% in all of the regions of the world where most of the livestock products are consumed: China, Europe, USA, Russia and Brazil. What a fantastic win-win-win for our ecosystem, our health and our bank account! So why has this obvious solution to so many of our problems been overlooked for so long?

8. The primary roadblock is what I call the “protein myth.” It is the sincere belief by well over 90% of the world’s meat-eating population that they truly NEED to eat animal protein to be healthy. This large group of skeptics includes most of the brightest and best-educated people in the world—including most of our scientists, medical doctors, world leaders and environmentalists. Since they don’t think it’s possible for us to be healthy without eating animals—their brains remain locked, and a plethora of plant-based solutions to the world’s most crucial problems never even make it to the table for consideration. The right leader can change that quickly.

9. The “protein myth” must be dispelled. How do we do that? By enlisting the most influential people in the world who already know that eating a whole food, plant-based diet is by far the healthiest and greenest way to go. And most of them have found that it is also the most delicious way to eat. These enlightened individuals include Bill Clinton, Serena & Venus Williams, Gary Player, Stevie Wonder, James Cameron, Martina Navratilova, Al Gore, Biz Stone, Michelle Pfeiffer, Ellen DeGeneres and many, many more. These are the people that I consider to be the credible “messengers” in this whole process of changing what we eat. We also need “leaders” who’re prepared to make this global dietary shift their #1 priority—as they build and manage the worldwide communications infrastructure necessary to make this happen. Finally, we need

“funders” who will provide the billions (or trillions) of dollars necessary to take this urgent message to the entire world. If FaceBook thought that “WhatsApp” was worth \$22 billion, what do you think saving our ecosystem is worth?

10. “Working on the demand side of the equation.” This is what makes this process so much easier and more efficient than seeking emission reductions in the transportation or energy sector. All we have to do is enlist an army of credible *messengers* to take this message to the world—as many times as it takes to start getting traction. As millions of people quickly begin to replace their livestock calories, the markets will respond to make sure that all of those new plant-based eaters will have no trouble finding loads of great-tasting options from which to choose. I call the process a well-funded, globally coordinated, never-ending, global awareness campaign. In advertising, there is a term called “effective frequency,” which is the number of times people need to hear new information before they start believing it. It will take quite a few times in this case but, with the right game-plan, it can definitely happen.

11. As few as one fully enlightened leader could jumpstart this entire process. She/he would need to have a globally-recognized name, a reputation for integrity, experience in managing large, complex operations and access to the funds necessary to get this crucial project moving quickly. He/she would also need to make this global awareness campaign their #1 priority for the rest of their lives. I have been studying the backgrounds of about twenty individuals that I believe possess the requisite mix of qualities and experience to have a great chance of success with this project within the three years and eight months that we have remaining before 2020. I hope that some of them will be reading this 12-point paper soon.

12. A word about vision. I believe that almost anything that can be imagined or envisioned is possible. Two paragraphs describing my vision for this process are provided below and it all hinges on LEADERSHIP. As a leader, you may be wondering why no environmental group, scientist, powerful individual leader or government entity has acted on the “only global, pragmatic way to stop climate change that has ever been proposed” (See paragraphs 8 and 9). I think it is time for that to change and, with a full-time commitment from the right leader, I believe that we can get this done. I look forward to hearing from you.

A Vision of Harmony

As people everywhere begin to learn the complete truth about their food choices, millions will start replacing most, if not all, of their animal-based calories with healthier and “greener,” plant-based alternatives. As we begin working on the “demand” side of the equation, markets will quickly respond, people will begin getting healthier, the cost of healthcare will plummet, water will become more plentiful, trees can be planted on the freed-up land and our fragile ecosystem will begin to heal.

We must quickly learn to live in harmony with nature. No less than our future as a species hangs in the balance. Eventually, we must also deal with overpopulation, over-consumption and the excessive burning of fossil fuels—but those tasks will take many decades, if not centuries. Taking URGENT action NOW with our food choices can buy us the time we need to address them all.

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