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THE 4LEAF GLOBAL IMPACT

By J. Morris Hicks

In addition to you getting healthier, many great things happen when you start eating better. When you begin moving up the 4Leaf scale with your food choices, you'll be helping to improve far more about life on this planet than you ever imagined. Your own health is extremely important, but it's just the beginning.

When you start replacing meat, dairy, egg and fish calories with healthier, plant-based alternatives, you will be a part of the biggest win-win in the history of humanity:

- Win for your own health
- Win for our economy and cost of living
- Win for the health of our fragile ecosystem that sustains us
- Win for the future of our civilization and the long-term viability of the human species

In addition to the plethora of personal health benefits associated with better food choices, here is my top ten list of other great things we'll be doing for our world:

1. Cost of Healthcare. Standing at almost \$3 trillion in just the USA, this economic nightmare is beginning to threaten our entire way of life in the developed world--where most of the unhealthy foods are eaten. Since the CDC estimates that 80% of our medical costs are lifestyle related with diet being a huge part, that \$3 trillion number can be cut by more than \$2 trillion when enough citizens begin eating at the 3Leaf or 4Leaf level. That helps everyone.

2. World Hunger. In a nutshell, there's simply not enough land and water in the world to feed everyone the Typical Western Diet. That's because, on average, the production of animal-based foods requires over ten times as much land, water and energy as do the same number of healthier, plant-based calories. If everyone ate the way we do in the USA, we'd need more than two planet Earths to feed us all--and we only have one.

3. Water Scarcity. This is our most urgent problem. One billion people don't have enough water today and it's getting worse all the time. Most of the water used by the average American goes to raise the livestock we consume, making it by far our single largest use (and waste) of water. It takes more water to produce one pound of beef than the average American uses to shower for an entire year! If you care about ending the world's water crisis, eat more plants!

4. Soil Erosion and Deforestation. Land is a finite resource and we're depleting it rapidly. Since 1970, we've destroyed some 30 million acres of rainforest a year--mostly for the raising of livestock. Each year, we lose an area of land the size of South Carolina to erosion, mostly due to the raising of billions of animals for our dinner tables.

5. Species Extinction. As a result of our actions in #4, we're destroying the natural habitats of hundreds of thousands of species. Every species in nature plays a role in the incredibly complex ecosystem that sustains us. Today, because of human activity (primarily the raising of livestock), the rate of species extinction is running at over 1,000 times the normal rate in nature. We humans are causing the biggest species extinction since the demise of the dinosaurs.

6. Dependence on fossil fuels. Another primary cause of climate change, our global consumption of fossil fuels has gone up every year since 1950--despite all the solar panels, electric cars and windmills that you see. The livestock industry uses massive amounts of fossil fuels to grow and transport animal feed and the livestock itself. Hence, one of the most powerful ways to actually start using less fossil fuel is to replace most of our animal-based calories with healthier, plant-based alternatives.

7. Climate Change. This is the elephant in the room and it exacerbates all the other problems we have. The U.N. reports that the raising of livestock generates more greenhouse gasses than all of transportation combined. Despite the fact that raising livestock is the leading cause of climate change, the largest environmental groups like Greenpeace and Sierra Club never mention it. Why not? Because being identified as "anti-meat" would hurt their fundraising efforts. Check out the documentary *Conspiracy* to learn more about this infuriating issue.

8. Sustainability of our Civilization. If the alarming trends above are not reversed in the next ten years, many experts (Stephen Emmott, Lester Brown and others) agree that our civilization will ultimately collapse--well before the end of this century. We simply must learn to live in harmony with nature. Our future depends on it.

9. Sustainability of our Species. Who could not be concerned about this one? By definition, it has to be the most important issue in the 200,000-year history of humankind. And since all of the other issues threatening human survival on Earth will take many decades or centuries to fully address, that leaves only one viable pathway to the long-term sustainability of our species--a rapid move in the direction of a plant-based diet for humans. But that is not happening; in fact, it's the reverse. According to my extrapolation of United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization data, for every American or European moving toward eating more plants, there are 100 people in the developing world moving in the other direction.

10. Suffering of Animals. In addition to all of the above, what we're doing to the animals is abominable. Roughly 100 billion animals per year live a horrible life and suffer an awful death in this world so that we may eat their flesh. If you count the sea creatures, the number is over a trillion. And it's going up quickly as people in the developing world consume more meat, dairy, eggs and fish.

Are we in a hopeless situation? Not if we work together to influence billions of people throughout the world to simply begin to eat more plants. The good news is that this is the easiest, quickest and most powerful step we can take--and, as a bonus, it promotes our own health and it's delicious!

So let's get started. The win-win 4Leaf proposition is just too powerful to wait any longer. Begin by taking the 4Leaf Survey in the next chapter.