

Eat green 2018: Sustainable consumption, plant-based foods the order of the day

Now is the time to join the green revolution, with sustainable food consumption on the rise and plant-based protein predicted to be one of the biggest food trends in 2018. Promoted by Humane Society International and Africa, Green Monday SA encourages South Africans to swap meat, eggs and dairy for plant-based alternatives for one day a week.



In South Africa, we raise more than one billion farm animals for food every year. Eating more plant-based foods boasts a variety of benefits, from reversing chronic diseases to saving precious water resources. HSI/Africa offers these tips to improve our health, the environment and animal welfare:

- **Eat green for your health:** Numerous studies indicate that a diet rich in plant-based foods can help improve your health. In South Africa, nearly 30% of men and 56% of women are either overweight or obese but research shows that people who eat fewer animal products have lower rates of obesity. Many of the deadliest chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure, can also be prevented, treated and even reversed through a plant-based diet. It comes as no surprise that the World Health Organization recommends that we “consume more fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole grains, and transition away from saturated animal fats to unsaturated vegetable oil fats.”

- **Eat green for the environment:** Raising animals for food contributes to dangerous climate change, land environmental degradation, water pollution and water shortages. According to The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “animal agriculture is one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global.” It has never been more important for South Africans to save our precious natural resources, and with the death-threatening droughts we are experiencing, the focus is on water conservation. By consuming fewer animal products and eating more plant-based foods this year, we can help protect South Africa’s water supply. Producing meat, milk and eggs requires huge amounts of water, whether for growing feed, cleaning housing enclosures, hydrating the animals, disposing of their waste or disinfecting slaughtering equipment. Amazingly, it takes more than 4,000 litres of water to produce a kilogramme of chicken meat, significantly more than needed to produce almost every other plant-based food.

• **Eat green for animals:** Replacing meat, milk and eggs benefits farm animals in South Africa, millions of whom spend their entire lives in cages or crates, where they are unable to exercise, engage in their natural behaviours, and often cannot even turn around because of lack of space. South Africans consume 7.8 billion eggs each year – of which more than 95% are sourced from hens who spend their entire lives in battery cages. More than 50% of pregnant sows in South Africa spend their lives in gestation crates. By eating more plant-based foods, we can decrease the demand for animal products, which results in fewer animals enduring a life of extreme confinement and suffering.

Local personalities, restaurants, food brands, government departments, educational institutions and other leaders of the industry have already joined the movement and implemented green campaigns for 2018. The University of Cape Town and the University of Witwatersrand have agreed to add daily plant-based options to all of its residence dining hall menus, and the Western Cape Government, Department of Health and HSI formed a partnership through the WoW! healthy lifestyles initiative to increase public awareness about the health and environmental benefits of plant-based foods.



#GreenMondaySA: Eat less meat, save the world

Ruth Cooper 6 Apr 2017



“It is really easy to replace animal products in our meals with delicious and healthy plant-based foods,” says Leozette Roode, campaign manager for HSI/Africa. “Simply use nut milk instead of dairy milk and add pulses like lentils and beans to your soups and stews for protein. ‘Meaty’ vegetables like mushrooms are great in pasta and soaked cashews make the creamiest sauces. There are also a variety of plant-based meat brands available in South Africa to replace braai favourites like patties, schnitzels, nuggets and sausages.”

We can all stand up for animals every time we sit down to eat by reducing the number of animal products we eat, replacing them with plant-based products or animal products from sources that adhere to higher animal welfare standards when possible.

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