

EWG's quick tips for reducing your **DIET'S CLIMATE FOOTPRINT**



The way we eat has a direct impact on the climate crisis, and there are steps everyone can take to rethink their diets in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

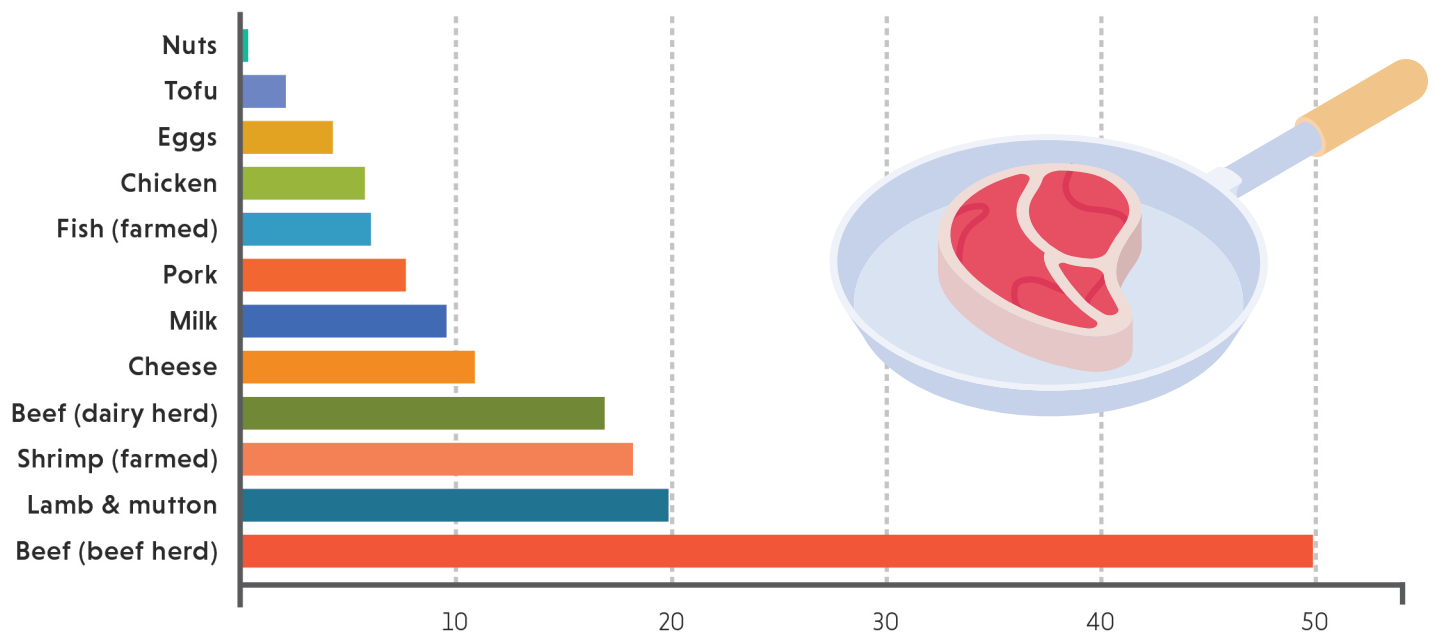
Eating less meat – especially beef – can significantly reduce how much your choices contribute to the climate crisis.

Experts at Oxford have estimated that beef consumption produces over twice as much carbon emissions as eating lamb and more than nine times as much as eating chicken. If the U.S. meat and dairy industry were its own country, it would be the **world's 12th largest greenhouse gas emitter.**

The protein you choose

Different foods have different climate impacts. For instance, the greenhouse gas emissions of 12 common proteins vary significantly.

Carbon footprint: greenhouse gas emissions measured in kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalents (kgCO₂eq) per 100 grams of protein




Source: GHG data based on global averages of all production types

How your diet affects the climate

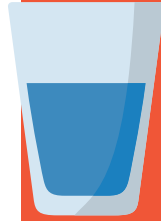
Fertilizing feed for animals with chemical fertilizers produces nitrous oxide emissions, a greenhouse gas **300 times more powerful than carbon dioxide**, or CO₂. When animals eat this feed and produce manure, the methane emissions that are generated are **80 times more powerful than CO₂**. Plowing up and tilling forest and grasslands to grow feed for animals also releases carbon from soil into the atmosphere.

Every other sector of the economy is lowering their greenhouse gas emissions, but agriculture's share of these emissions has gone up 12 percent since 1990. And meat production is responsible for much of that increase. By 2050, greenhouse gas emissions from animals and producing their feed could easily account for **one-third of U.S. emissions.**

Animal agriculture poses other health risks



Farm pollution containing animal wastes, pathogens and excess nutrients can wash off farm fields into drinking water supplies.



High levels of nitrate in drinking water have been linked to certain types of cancer, and the byproducts of chemicals added to drinking water to address animal waste and other organic matter in water supplies have also been linked to cancer.

Excess nutrient runoff from fertilizer and animal waste into bodies of water can generate toxic algae blooms.

Air pollution caused by meat production leads to thousands of premature deaths annually—more than deaths associated with emissions from coal-fired power plants.

The overuse of life-saving antibiotics to protect animals raised in crowded conditions makes bacteria more resistant. More than 35,000 Americans annually die from antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections. About 80 percent of antibiotics are used for animal production.



If global protein demand doubles, as some predict, and most of that demand is met by animal proteins, simply changing the way we farm will not be enough to change the trajectory of greenhouse emissions linked to meat. **We also need to change the way we eat.**



How to shrink your diet's climate footprint

If enough people changed their diets, we could still meet our climate goals.

Following a plant-forward diet can also help people save money. **Here's what you can do:**

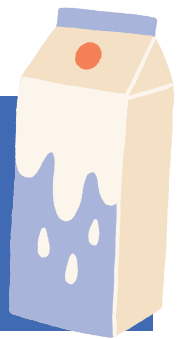


Eat less protein.

We need to eat protein, but we consume more than we need to support a healthy diet.

Consume more plant-based "dairy."

Switching to plant-based dairy products like plant-based milk is an easy way to reduce your carbon footprint. If you're concerned about soy, try a different plant-based version.



Switch to healthier proteins.

Swapping in plant-based proteins, like tofu, nuts, beans, pulses and lentils or plant-based foods can be much better for the climate – and your health.



Eat more fruits and veggies.

Few of us eat five daily servings of fruits and vegetables. To avoid pesticides, check out EWG's **Shoppers' Guide to Pesticides in Produce™**.

Avoid waste.

Twenty percent of meat is thrown away. Buy less and freeze unused portions to use later.



If you choose to eat meat, pick certified organic, grass-fed, pasture-raised or humane meat.

Don't fall for bogus label claims like "low carbon beef."

Look for third-party verification that also prohibits growth-boosting treatments and antibiotics abuse that can lead to antibiotic resistance. **Learn more at [ewg.org/research/labeldecoder](https://www.ewg.org/research/labeldecoder)**

