



What's your beef? - Oliver Kucher

I'm a meat-eater. Have been my whole life. And if I had a penny for every time I heard about how bad my eating habits are for the planet, well, I'd be laughing. Though some may consider me a Neanderthal for enjoying a bit of meat for dinner, ignorant I am not, so I've taken it upon myself to figure out whether or not my penchant for meat is, in fact, destroying the planet.

Now, I'm under no illusion that because of the gluttonous desire for meat that millions of us have in the world, football field-sized patches of the Amazon rainforest are being cleared by the minute for pasture for cattle; 'dead zones' are sprouting up across the globe as a result of chemical run-off into bodies of water from intensively farmed land; and a third of the world's land is used just to grow crops to feed animals - a staggering amount of space on our planet. So, in light of all that, the automatic answer would be that yes, my fondness for eating meat is in fact destroying the planet, as I'm contributing to the above problems. But what if I were eating organic?

This is where it gets interesting... if I were eating organic, it could be argued that I'd almost be having a positive impact on the environment.

Wildlife is 50% more abundant on organic farms that produce meat and dairy and grow crops. They're places where pollinators thrive, which are the very reason much of the food we eat even exists on this planet. The soil on organic farms is wonderfully healthy, as chemical fertilisers are stringently restricted, so it stores more carbon, which helps curb global warming. And the animals are happier and healthier, being looked after under the highest standards of welfare. The routine use of antibiotics and hormone injections - common practices in intensive farming - is also absolutely prohibited.

So, through that organic sirloin I'll be cooking to a mouth-watering medium-well for steak night tonight, I'll be supporting an organic farmer out there somewhere, who's working with nature, and not against it. I'm eating meat the sustainable way, you could say. And if I decide to eat less of that organic meat - which I should, which we all should - then that will turn an already encouraging situation into a promising one. I'm a staunchly meat-centric person, so eating less meat overall goes against every grain in my body, but we shouldn't underestimate the positive impact that even just one less meaty meal a week - or a completely meat-free day for that matter - can have on the future of this planet.

Eating meat gets a bad rap, and it's no secret why. But you can make the habit more sustainable, if that meat is organic, and if you're eating less of it. Makes sense doesn't it? Anyway... steak awaits!

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