



Press Release

April 10th, 2012

Women's nutritional habits better for the environment

When it comes to the question of which eating styles are kinder on the environment, women come off far better. This has been shown by studies carried out by scientists at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany.

Based on representative food consumption and production data, they compared the environmental impacts of various eating styles. They took results from the last National Nutrition Survey, which in 2005 and 2006 saw around 20,000 people in Germany interviewed in great detail with regard to their eating habits, and evaluated these from a nutritional ecology perspective.

In terms of impacts on the greenhouse effect, ammonia emissions (by way of fertilizers) and the amount of land required, it was the average nutritional pattern of women which demonstrated clear advantages, resulting from lower proportions of those foods whose production is more of a burden on the environment. These mostly include animal products, in particular beef and veal as well as butter and pork.

“If all the men in Germany were to adopt the typical consumption profile of women, whereby their consumption of meat and sausage products would be reduced by around a half and these would be replaced by higher levels of vegetables, fruit and cereal products, this would free up an area at home and abroad of approximately 15,000 square kilometres. That's slightly larger than Northern Ireland ” explains study leader Toni Meier of the Department of Agronomy and Organic Farming at the Martin Luther University. “What’s more, greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions would be cut by about 15 million and 60,000 tonnes respectively.

In Germany, food is estimated to be responsible for about 20 per cent of the overall greenhouse effect. “With regard to ammonia, food consumption is actually responsible for 95 per cent of all emissions,” points out Toni Meier. “Our results make it clear that, depending on the proportion of the overall effect, the potential impact had by dietary shifts could vary considerably. Women’s nutritional habits may serve as a good example.”



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The researchers from Halle have published their findings in the “International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment”:

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/1415530205u58376/>

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