University of Bedfordshire - Beds Talk

Polhill Ave
Bedford MK41 9EA

Eating, Drinking, & Exercising in a Warming World

Food Footprint Showcase

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Footprint in an Ever-Changing World

As the conversations about climate change heat up, it can be hard to know how to add your drop to the bucket. Giving careful consideration to the carbon and water footprints of the foods and drinks you consume are an excellent start!

Carbon Footprinting[1]

A carbon footprint is the total greenhouse gas emissions cause directly and indirectly by an individual, organization, event or product.

Components

Farming - increased habitat destruction for pastures and cattle fodder
Production Plants - conversion of raw ingredients into products, packaging and distribution
Use - consumer use
End of Life - post-consumer disposal

Water Footprinting[2]

A water footprint references the amount of freshwater that any given process or activity uses.

Components

Blue Water - surface and groundwater required to produce an item

- usually crop irrigation for foods

Green Water - rainwater used to make an item

- dry farming crops for food

Grey Water - fresh water required to dilute pollutants and make water pure enough to meet EPA standards

- water becomes polluted from agricultural runoff or leaching from soil

Black Water - wastewater from bathroom/toilets

- includes kitchens and dishwashers due to grease and pathogenic contaminants

Takeaways

Small changes make big differences!!

Make mindful food choices

Reduce overall meat consumption - veganism/vegetarianism are not required

When consuming meats, elect for those with a lower carbon and water footprint: ie chicken over beef

Reduce! Reuse! Recycle!

Opt for foods with minimal packaging

Consider composting if/when possible

Prioritise companies with transparent carbon and sustainability pledges

Purchase perishable foods as needed, be sure to preserve what can't be used immediately to reduce waste

Useful Links

1. FAQs on the environmental impacts of food: https://ourworldindata.org/faqs-environmental-impacts-food
2. Freshwater withdrawals per kg of food product: https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/water-withdrawals-per-kg-poore
3. Freshwater withdrawals per 100g of protein: https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/water-per-protein-poore
4. Greenhouse Gas Emissions across the supply chain: https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/food-emissions-supply-chain
5. The carbon footprint of foods: https://ourworldindata.org/carbon-footprint-food-methane
6. The Carbon Footprint of everyday products and activities: https://www.co2everything.com/
7. Water footprint calculator: https://www.waterfootprint.org/resources/interactive-tools/personal-water-footprint-calculator/

References

1. University of Michigan Center for Sustainable Systems, Carbon Footprint Factsheet. https://css.umich.edu/publications/factsheets/sustainability-indicators/carbon-footprint-factsheet
2. The Water Footprint of Food. https://foodprint.org/issues/the-water-footprint-of-food/