

PRACTICAL STEPS

- 1 Take an interest in nutrition, and its effect on your health.
- 2 If choosing the vegetarian option it may be wise to begin gradually by replacing some meat meals with a vegetarian alternative.
- 3 Where possible eat locally produced organic food.
- 4 Try to buy meat, fish and eggs from animals which have been reared humanely e.g. free range, or to Soil Association (organic) or RSPCA standards.
- 5 Campaign for better farm animal welfare with Compassion in World Farming and the RSPCA, and through the churches.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Vegetarian Society UK Ltd, Dunham Road, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 4QG.

0161 925 2000. www.vegsoc.org

Vegan Society, 7 Battle Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN37 7AN.

01424 427393. www.vegansociety.com

British Nutrition Foundation, High Holborn House, 52-54 High Holborn, London WC1V 6RQ. 020 7404 6504. www.nutrition.org.uk

Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals, PO Box 7193, Hook, Hants. RG27 8GT.

www.aswa.org.uk

Catholic Concern for Animals, 12 Swan Court, Witney OX28 6EA. 01993 703616.

www.catholic-animals.org

Methodist Animal Welfare Group, 32 Balderton Buildings, Balderton Street, London W1Y 1TD. 020 7493 7179.

Compassion in World Farming, 5A Charles Street, Petersfield, Hants. GU32 3EH.

01730 264208. www.ciwf.org.uk

RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex. 08705 555999.

www.rspca.org.uk

Sustain, The Alliance for Better Food and Farming, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF. 020 7837 1228. www.sustainweb.org

Traidcraft, (for pulses & nuts produced & marketed with fairness & justice) Kingsway, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear NE11 0NE.

0191 491 5492. www.traidcraft.co.uk

National Association of Farmers Markets, PO Box 575, Southampton SO15 7BZ. 0845 230 2150. www.farmersmarkets.net

BOOKS

Carol Adams, *Beyond Animal Rights — a Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals*, Continuum, 2000.

Tim Cooper, *Sustaining the Earth*, St John's Extension Studies, Bramcote, Nottingham. NG9 3RL, 1997.

Celia E. Deane-Drummond, *The Ethics of Nature*, Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Andrew Linzey & Dorothy Yamamoto (eds) *Animals on the Agenda*, SCM, 1998; Linzey, *Animal Theology*, SCM, 1994.

Tony Sargent, *Animal Rights and Wrongs: A Biblical Perspective*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1996.

Vegetarian Cookbooks

Dennis Cotter, *Paradiso Seasons*, Atrium, 2003.

Rosamond Richardson, *Great Vegetarian Cookbook*, Kyle Cathie, 2001.

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VEGETARIANISM: May Christians eat meat?

"A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast" (Prov. 12:10).

Should we eat meat and use products derived from animals? Could a vegetarian diet be an appropriate Christian response to God's will that we love our neighbours and care for this earth?

Christians today, as in the past, take different views on vegetarianism, but Christian teaching affirms human responsibility for animals: exploitation is forbidden.

As Christians we have to consider many aspects: biblical teaching, justice, unselfishness, caring for others, animal welfare, human health, sustainable personal lifestyles and the future of eco-systems and the planet.

These topics are explored briefly overleaf with suggestions for discussion. Further information can be obtained from the resources listed on the back page.



THE BIBLE AND CHRISTIAN TRADITION

"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them" (Mt. 6:26).

Living creatures, including farm animals, have their own value under God. Some biblical passages picture people eating meat, others show vegetarianism as an ideal with humans and animals not killing or eating one another (Gen. 1:29; Gen. 9:3; Isa. 11:6-9, 65:25).

The Gospels do not explicitly prohibit meat eating. It seems Jesus ate fish and meat (Lk. 24:41-43; Mt. 26:17-21). Even so, His teaching showed that God cares for animals (Mt. 6:26, 12:11, 18:12; cf. Deut. 25:4).

Clement of Alexandria, St Basil and St Jerome, saints of the early church, condemned meat eating. Other Christians in the past, especially in the monastic orders, abstained from meat to deprive themselves of something they enjoyed as a sacrifice to God. Most Christians continued to eat meat, but a Christian preacher helped found the Vegetarian Society in 1847.

Thought

After reading the biblical passages cited, and thinking about them in the light of today's understanding of human nutrition and farming methods, what do you think a Christian attitude should be towards eating meat?

ANIMAL WELFARE

Industrialized prosperity has enabled more people to afford meat. This greater demand has led to exploitation of animals with intensive factory farming methods. 3000 farm animals are slaughtered in Britain every minute of every working day. Animals which are exported live often travel long distances to horrific slaughter houses.



By maximising their growth, and interfering with their genetic integrity, we treat animals as mere economic resources to supply our excessive appetites. Feeding meat to herbivores is widely believed to have led to BSE in cattle and the subsequent mass slaughter.

Free range meat is more expensive than factory farmed meat, but the animals have a better quality of life.

Thought

A farming member of your church has got rid of his battery hen cages and invested in a large barn where his hens have freedom to move inside. They still have to be de-beaked because of the large numbers in a confined space. Would you buy eggs from him to encourage him or criticize him for not giving his hens freedom to roam outside with fewer hens having more space?

LAND USE AND FOOD DISTRIBUTION

In the UK much of our countryside is shaped and maintained by grazing. But grass is often supplemented by imported feed grain. 36% of the world's grain harvest is fed to cattle, poultry and fish. Beef cattle need up to 7kg of grain for each kg of meat produced.

The rate of growth of the world's grain harvest has slowed, fish stocks are falling and 90 million people are being added each year to world population. As developing countries become more affluent millions are eating much more meat and pressures on resources are growing.

Thought

A well balanced vegetarian diet can be cheaper, more satisfying and uses a fairer proportion of the world's grain stock. But can soil fertility be maintained without animal manure? If meat eating in the UK was abandoned on a large scale what would happen to the economies of many farming communities? Should we just export more meat? Should our taxes support sheep and cow production in upland areas?

HUMAN HEALTH

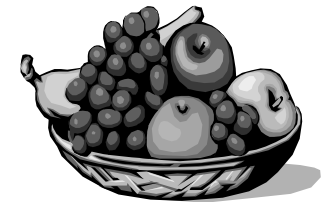
A vegetarian diet usually contains higher fibre and more fruit and vegetables. Recent medical evidence suggests this helps protect against bowel disorders, cancers and heart disease. There is growing evidence that traces of antibiotics and hormones left in meat are detrimental to our health. Intensive farming

methods and unnatural feeding regimes have rebounded on human health. Salmonella, CJD and E.coli raise fears about eating meat.

With a vegetarian diet careful planning is needed so that adequate protein and iron are eaten. Protein is found in beans, peas, lentils, cheese, eggs, nuts, soya and tofu. Iron is found in fortified breakfast cereals, beans, peas, lentils and green leafy vegetables.

Project

Plan two tasty, balanced vegetarian meals and ensure one of them is suitable for people whose digestions cannot take pulses.



WHAT TO DO NEXT?

The issues raised in this leaflet need to be considered by each individual remembering that as Christians we have responsibilities, under God, for our fellow creatures including our fellow humans.

On the back page are practical suggestions and further resources to help continue the discussion. Also send for the topic leaflet on CEL's LOAF principles which encourage people to eat food which is **L**ocally produced, **O**rganically grown, **A**nimal friendly and **F**airly traded.