

**Steve Kaufman of the Christian Vegetarian Association**

**(<http://www.all-creatures.org/cva/default.htm> ) writes on Nov. 11, 2010:**

Three weeks ago I wrote an essay about global warming. I noted that, if we are to take seriously our calling to be good stewards of God's Creation, we must address this growing crisis. Since that time, I was contacted by Jeff Anhang, a co-author of the article *Livestock and Climate Change* published by *WorldWatch* in Nov/Dec 2009, which concluded that animal agriculture contributes 51% of man-made greenhouse gasses.\* His comments, and the articles to which he kindly referred me, offered some further insights that I'd like to share.

Greenhouse gasses remain in the atmosphere for many years, particularly CO<sub>2</sub>, which has a half-life of at least 100 years. These gasses generate positive-feedback loops, such as the one I discussed three weeks ago, in which global warming melts sea ice, exposing waters that absorb the sun's radiated heat much more efficiently than ice. Most climatologists agree that humanity must substantially curb greenhouse gas emissions within the next few years in order to prevent runaway global warming, which would be catastrophic for humanity and many of the world's creatures.

Many people favor moving toward sources of energy that do not require CO<sub>2</sub>-emitting fossil fuels, such as solar energy and wind power. However, these technologies will require huge investments and require decades to implement on a massive scale. Meanwhile, moving toward a plant-based diet is quick and easy, and it can have at least as great an impact on global warming as a shift to alternative energy sources. Gooding and Anhang's analysis indicates that a 1% reduction in worldwide meat consumption would prevent global warming to the same degree as the investment of \$3 trillion in solar energy.

Those hoping to consume animal products in an environmentally responsible manner might find this impossible. Only about 8% of animal flesh is produced from pasture-raised animals, and there is little land available to increase this amount without deforestation. Raising cows on pastures tends to result in less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, but the cows have as much as three times more methane emissions, and methane is a far more potent greenhouse gas than CO<sub>2</sub>. Finally, most pasture-raised animals spend the final parts of their lives in feedlots, and the grains used to feed the cows contribute heavily to atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels.

Many think that eating certain kinds of flesh, such as chicken, will reduce their greenhouse footprints. However, nearly all animals produce the same amount of CO<sub>2</sub> per pound of body mass, so the contribution to global warming of animal respiration – a leading cause of global warming from animal agriculture – is roughly the same for all farmed animals. Therefore, if humanity wants to avoid ecological catastrophe, rapidly moving toward a plant-based diet is a necessary, though perhaps not sufficient, change.

\*To read the full article, please use the link provided on the *Spiritual Practices* page of the MACUCC website.