

Food shortages could force world into vegetarianism, warn scientists

Level 1 • Elementary

1 Warmer

- How many days a week do you eat meat?
- Meat eaters:** Your vegetarian friend or colleague invites you to their house for dinner. How do you feel?
Vegetarians: Your meat-eating friend or colleague invites you to their house for dinner. How do you feel?
- Meat eaters:** Do you think you might ever become a vegetarian?
Vegetarians: Do you think you might ever start to eat meat?

2 Key words

Write the key words from the article next to the definitions below. Then find the words in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers have been given to help you.

shortages

warning

calories

protein

diet

supplies

- when you tell someone of a possible problem or danger _____ (para 1)
- amounts or quantities of something that you can use _____ (para 1)
- the food that a person usually eats _____ (para 1)
- a substance in foods such as meat, eggs, and milk that people need in order to grow and be healthy _____ (para 2)
- a unit that measures how much energy you get from food _____ (para 4)
- not enough of something _____ (para 5)

droughts

developing countries

limit

crops

malnourished

increase

- to stop something from increasing beyond a certain level _____ (para 5)
- to become bigger in amount or number _____ (para 5)
- long periods of time when there is little or no rain _____ (para 5)
- quite poor countries that do not have much industry _____ (para 6)
- plants grown for food, usually on a farm _____ (para 7)
- weak or ill because you do not eat enough or do not eat enough of the right foods _____ (para 8)

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John Vidal, environment editor
26 August, 2012

- 1 Water scientists have given a very strong warning about the world's food supplies. They say that everyone may have to change to a vegetarian diet by 2050.
- 2 We believe there will be an extra two billion people in the world by 2050. Humans get about 20% of their protein from animal-based products now, but this may need to decrease to just 5% to feed these extra people, say the world's top water scientists.
- 3 "There will not be enough water to produce food for the nine-billion population in 2050 if more people start eating like people in the West," the report by Malik Falkenmark and colleagues at the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) said.
- 4 "There will be enough water if the percentage of animal-based foods is limited to 5% of total calories."
- 5 There are warnings that water shortages will limit food production. At the same time, Oxfam and the UN prepare for a possible second global food crisis in five years. Prices for food items such as corn and wheat have increased nearly 50% on international markets since June. The price increase has been caused by very bad droughts in the US and Russia, and weak monsoon rains in Asia. More than 18 million people already have serious food shortages across the Sahel.
- 6 Oxfam says that the effects of price increases will be very bad in developing countries that need to buy food from other countries, including parts of Latin America, North Africa and the Middle East. Food shortages in 2008 led to fighting in 28 countries.
- 7 Changing to a vegetarian diet is one way to keep more water to grow food, the scientists said. Animal protein-rich food uses five to ten times more water than vegetarian food. One third of the world's farmland is used to grow crops to feed animals.
- 8 "Nine hundred million people already don't have enough food and two million people are malnourished, even though we are producing more food," they said. "70% of all water is used in farming, and growing more food to feed an extra two billion people by 2050 will put more pressure on water and land."
- 9 The report was released at the start of the annual world water conference in Stockholm, Sweden, where 2,500 politicians, UN groups, non-governmental groups and researchers from 120 countries met to discuss global water supply problems.
- 10 Eating too much, malnourishment and waste are all increasing. "We will need a new recipe to feed the world in the future," said the report's editor, Anders Jägerskog.

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3 Summarizing the article

Match these sentence halves to summarize the article.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. We believe the population of the world will ... | a. ... might be able to feed everyone in 2050. |
| 2. If we don't reduce the amount of meat we eat, there ... | b. ... not to waste food or water. |
| 3. If we reduce the amount of protein we get from animal-based foods to 5%, we ... | c. ... not been enough rain. |
| 4. We need five to ten times more water to produce meat than we ... | d. ... increase by two billion by 2050. |
| 5. At the moment, 70% of the world's water ... | e. ... won't be enough food to feed the world. |
| 6. The cost of food has increased because there has ... | f. ... is used to produce food. |
| 7. To reduce the food shortages, we should also try ... | g. ... need to produce vegetables. |

4 Collocations

- a. What nouns in the article follow the words *food* and *water*? Write them below.

food

water

- b. Use these collocations to talk about the article.

5 Discussion

- Do you think that if we all change to a vegetarian diet, there will be enough food to feed the world?
- What else could we do?

6 Group task

Share your favourite vegetarian recipes with your class by either:

- making a home video while you prepare vegetarian food (the commentary should be in English, of course);
- talking about your recipe to your class.
- writing recipes to share.

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KEY

2 Key words

Teacher's note: To make this task more communicative, half the students could do questions 1 to 6 and the other half 7 to 12, then they could share and discuss their answers. Encourage them to use dictionaries for additional information on the words, including their pronunciation.

1. warning
2. supplies
3. diet
4. protein
5. calories
6. shortages
7. limit
8. increase
9. droughts
10. developing countries
11. crops
12. malnourished

7 Group task

Teacher's note: The group task could be set as homework or even as a project that runs over the whole term.

3 Summarizing the article

1. d
2. e
3. a
4. g
5. f
6. c
7. b

4 Collocations

a.

food: shortages, supplies, production, crisis, items

water: scientists, institute, shortages, conference, supply