Veganism: A Cure for Global Hunger?

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Veganism: A Cure for Global Hunger?
By Jessica Stipek, Chapman University

Introduction
Research Question: How can a vegan lifestyle help prevent and solve many of the world’s contemporary issues? Why are people so reluctant to make this lifestyle change?

The contemporary world, and especially American society, faces many substantial problems such as global warming, poverty and hunger, obesity and other health issues, and a general lack of compassion for those who are different. In general, politicians, scientists, and other experts attempt to solve these problems in a very reactive rather than preventative way. Rather than encouraging Americans to eat a plant based diet in order to be healthy, medical professionals research surgical and medical technologies to fight Type II Diabetes and Heart Disease; instead of preventing world hunger by promoting a plant-based diet, privileged people are told to donate money to charity. Veganism has been proven to be a healthy, sustainable diet as well as a potential cure for world hunger and climate change. This research examines why individuals should take control of their lives and the planet by making this simple lifestyle change. This research specifically asks the question how can a vegan lifestyle help prevent and solve many of the world’s contemporary issues? Why are people so reluctant to make this lifestyle change? This poster examines the various positive effects of veganism from an economic, environmental, medical, and ethical perspective.

What is Veganism?
Key Terms
Vegan: “A way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals or food, clothing or any other purpose”

Eco-Vegan: an individual who chooses a vegan lifestyle for the purpose of protecting the environment and promoting sustainability

Health-Vegan: an individual who chooses a vegan diet for the purpose of personal health and disease prevention

Ethical-vegan: an individual who chooses a vegan lifestyle for the purpose of reducing animal exploitation

Vegetarian: “A person who does not eat meat, and sometimes other animal products, especially for moral, religious, or health reasons”

Why People Go Vegan:
1) Health and Nutrition
2) Environmental Protection
3) Morality
4) Social Justice
5) Logic

Effects of Veganism

Health
All necessary nutrients can be consumed from plants
Nutrition
- With some planning, it can be healthy for pregnant women
- Iron and B-12 are main nutrients vegans have to take supplements for
Disease prevention
- Vegans have lower rates of heart disease and Type II Diabetes
- Vegans have 50% higher chance of surviving breast cancer

Environmental
One pound of steak costs 5lbs of grain one gallon of water, 2500 gallons of water, 35lbs of top-soil
Global Warming
- Negative environmental effects of producing animal products: wastage of water and other resources, pollution, production of fewer nutrients, deforestation, species extinction
Methane emission
- Farm animals release 100 million tons of methane annually
Sustainability
- Veganism is most sustainable diet, followed by vegetarianism

A Cure for Global Hunger?
There is plenty of food in the world to feed all humans, yet most of that food is given to livestock
- In 2011, 883 million tons of corn and 260 million tons of soybeans were grown globally, yet 40-50% was consumed by farm animals
- A widespread adoption of a diet based upon grains and vegetables would reduce grain prices and make far more bulk food available for less affluent countries
- The amount of plants it takes to raise farm animals creates more food than each individual animal

The Ethics of Veganism
Three main ethical theories surrounding animal rights and veganism
1) Utilitarianism
2) Deontological
3) Rights-view
An ethic of care
- Expanding ethical sphere to include other species

Why Not Vegan?
Reactive vs. Preventative
- The preventative stance of veganism goes against the culture and values of American society
- In the Capitalistic West, the priority is on making money and developing new technologies
- Big Pharma and Big Dairy
Counterarguments
- “Middle class radicalism”
- Difference in opinion about the value of animal’s lives
- Health (i.e. people with anemia)
- Vegans as radical, anarchist, far-left

Conclusion
People choose veganism for many different reasons
- Veganism is used as a reactive technique to solve health and environmental issues, but would be more beneficial as a preventative approach to the world’s problems
- Only a mass shift in belief system and lifestyle will cause the main effects of veganism (ending global hunger, preventing further climate change, etc.)
Unfortunately, a dramatic change in the capitalistic priorities of the West must occur before we can see any real positive effects, which appears unlikely.

Someday, I hope that an argument for veganism will not have to include a discussion about health, the environment, or ending world hunger. This simply perpetuates the idea that humans have more inherent value than animals, which is the idea that I am trying to get away from. If all arguments for animal rights center around why they benefit humans, this just continues the system that exploited animals in the first place. Unfortunately, the conversation must start somewhere because it does no good to alienate people when one is trying to convince others to change their entire lifestyle and belief system.