

Rising population could lead to forced vegetarianism by 2050

Leading scientists have issued their firmest warnings yet that we need to cut back on meat-based supplies if we wish to sustain the earth's predicted population of 9 billion by 2050.

Currently, we get 20% of our protein from meat and animal products, though this will need to drop to 5% to allow for enough water per person by 2050.



Colin Chartres of the **International Water Management Institute** has proposed local water solutions as a way of protecting farmers whilst conserving water. Photo: Thomas Henrikson

Although cutting out meat may not seem an obvious choice to increase water supply, meat-based diets require five to ten times the amount of water needed than the diet of a vegetarian.

The scientists involved in the report explained the correlation clearly, writing: "With 70% of all available water being in agriculture, growing more food to feed an additional 2 billion people by 2050 will place greater pressure on available water and land."

Scientists have named other options, however, which include increased trade between countries with a food surplus and those with a food deficit, as well as cutting down on waste.

The report was published by a group of scientists led by Malik Falkenmark at the Stockholm International Water Institute. A separate report by the International Water Management Institute proposed other options.

It said that the most effective way to protect farmers from what it calls "food insecurity" in parts of the world such as sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia is to help them invest in local technology, as opposed to large-scale projects.

Director General Colin Chartres said: "We've witnessed again and again what happens to the world's poor - the majority of whom depend on agriculture for their livelihoods and already suffer from water scarcity - when they are at the mercy of our fragile global food system."

Abbie Cavendish

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