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Scientists: Food Shortages May Lead To Global Vegetarianism

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Lee Rannals for redOrbit.com – Your Universe Online

You may love your bacon, but one day you might have to learn to love tofu bacon according to recent scientific estimates.

Some of the world's leading water scientists say global food supply shortages will make the world's population have to switch over to a vegetarian diet over the next 40 years.

Currently, the protein from the average human diet derives from about 20 percent of meat, but the scientists estimate that number may drop to 5% in order to help feed the other 2 billion people who will be inhabiting this planet by 2050.

"There will [not be enough water available](#) on current croplands to produce food for the expected 9 billion population in 2050 if we follow current trends and changes towards diets common in western nations," the researchers wrote in the report.

"There will be just enough water if the proportion of animal-based foods is limited to 5% of total calories and considerable regional water deficits can be met by a ... reliable system of food trade."

[Oxfam International](#) and the U.N. are preparing for a possible second global food crisis in five years from now. As prices for corn and wheat continue to rise due to droughts in the U.S. and Russia, over 18 million people are already facing food shortages in some parts of the world.

Oxfam, an organization that tries to find solutions to poverty, forecast the price of corn and wheat will spike even more than they already have, creating a devastating impact in developing countries that rely heavily on food imports.

Scientists say a vegetarian diet is one way to increase the amount of water available to grow more food.

An animal food diet consumes five to 10 times more water than a vegetarian diet. Also, a third of the world's arable land is used to grow crops to feed animals.



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If vegetarianism doesn't seem like a viable option, then scientists say you could try and eliminate waste, and the trade between countries in food surplus and those in deficit needs to be increased.

"Nine hundred million people already go hungry and 2 billion people are malnourished in spite of the fact that per capita food production continues to increase," the researchers wrote. "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."

The report, written by Malik Falkenmark and colleagues at the [Stockholm International Water Institute \(SIWI\)](#), is being released at the annual world water conference in Sweden.

The authors say that in the future, competition for water between food production and other uses will intensify pressure on essential resources.

"The UN predicts that we must increase food production by 70% by mid-century," the report says. "This will place additional pressure on our already stressed water resources, at a time when we also need to allocate more water to satisfy global energy demand – which is expected to rise 60% over the coming 30 years – and to generate electricity for the 1.3 billion people currently without it."







Another report from the [International Water Management Institute \(IWMI\)](#) says the best way for countries to protect its farmers from food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia is help them invest in small pumps and simple technology.

"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," Dr. Colin Chartres, the director general, said in the report.

"Farmers across the developing world are increasingly relying on and benefiting from small-scale, locally-relevant water solutions. [These] techniques could increase yields up to 300% and add tens of billions of US dollars to household revenues across [sub-Saharan Africa](#) and south Asia."

Source: [Lee Rannals](#) for redOrbit.com – Your Universe Online

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