

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 7 | Issue 1

2024

© 2024 *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://www.ijlmh.com/>

Under the aegis of VidhiAagaz – Inking Your Brain (<https://www.vidhiaagaz.com/>)

This article is brought to you for “free” and “open access” by the International Journal of Law Management & Humanities at VidhiAagaz. It has been accepted for inclusion in the International Journal of Law Management & Humanities after due review.

In case of **any suggestions or complaints**, kindly contact Gyan@vidhiaagaz.com.

To submit your Manuscript for Publication in the **International Journal of Law Management & Humanities**, kindly email your Manuscript to submission@ijlmh.com.

Navigating Sustainable Diets: An Exploration of Choices and Consequences

SANIA S. BAFNA¹ AND PIYUSH PRANJAL²

ABSTRACT

The present article investigates the idea of sustainable food consumption, urging for a decrease in meat and dairy consumption to address worldwide environmental issues. It also examines the complexities of veganism, highlighting the necessity for well-informed decisions when facing challenges like nutritional deficiencies and misleading marketing. The article suggests a more balanced approach by promoting a shift toward a balanced lacto-vegetarian diet, thus advocating for health, sustainability, and environmental responsibility. It underscores the significance of individual learning and careful consideration in shaping dietary choices, contributing to the broader dialogue on cultivating an aware and resilient global consumption culture.

Keywords: *SDGs, Vegetarian, Vegan, Food habits, Diet.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times, the specter of climate change is not confined to the pages of a science textbook; it is an urgent reality that demands our collective attention. The palpable impact is evident in the rising temperatures of our planet, the gradual (and sometimes rapid) melting of glaciers, and the increasingly unpredictable nature of weather patterns. No longer can we dismiss it with a casual "not my problem," for each of us plays a role in this global concern and bears a corresponding responsibility. Even seemingly inconspicuous actions, such as our dietary choices, contribute to the larger narrative.

According to Manar Alsaleh, a UNV-Programme Assistant, dairy and meat products currently commandeer 83% of the world's farmland, yielding merely 18% of total human calories and 37% of global protein. The cessation of consumption of these items would usher in a substantial 75% reduction in farmland usage. This shift would not only facilitate the global restoration of ecosystems by mitigating deforestation (provided the freed-up farmland is not abused for

¹ Author is a Research Intern at CARML and Student at the Jindal Global Law School, O. P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, India.

² Author is an Associate Professor and Assistant Director at CARML, O. P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, India.

urbanization) and other deleterious impacts but also necessitate a significantly diminished land footprint to meet the nutritional needs of the global populace.³

Embarking on a transformative journey need not entail a radical overhaul; it can commence with modest steps, such as abstaining from meat on Mondays or substituting chicken with soy (at least occasionally). This start can be then followed by progressing towards initiatives like Veganuary, a movement that has garnered a record-breaking 700,000 participants⁴, underscoring a reassuring sentiment - "You are not alone."

Adopting a plant-based diet extends beyond personal choices. It aligns with the aspirations of the six Sustainable Development Goals⁵: Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), Climate Action (SDG 13), Life Below Water (SDG 14), and Life on Land (SDG 15). A plant-based diet is a resource-efficient alternative, demanding less land, water, and energy than animal-based diets. It offers a viable solution to global food scarcity while fostering a more sustainable food production system, minimizing waste, and promoting judicious use of natural resources.

A well-considered plant-based diet not only confers numerous health benefits, characterized by an abundance of essential nutrients and lower saturated fats, but also plays a pivotal role in preventing heart disease, obesity, and certain cancers. From a broader perspective, embracing plant-based living constitutes a potent instrument for climate action by diminishing the demand for animal products and reducing the carbon footprint linked to food consumption. By curbing reliance on animal-based products, plant-based diets actively contribute to environmental preservation, countering issues like deforestation, habitat destruction, species extinction, and overfishing, thus championing the cause of biodiversity and ecosystem conservation.⁶

Moreover, beyond the tangible ecological benefits, emerging research suggests a positive correlation between vegetarian and vegan diets and mental well-being. Studies indicate that plant-based diets rich in essential nutrients, antioxidants, and fiber may contribute to improved mental health outcomes.⁷ Including whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes, not only provides a diverse range of nutrients vital for brain function but may also be linked to a lower risk of mood disorders and enhanced cognitive function. Furthermore, the ethical

³"Changing Your Diet Can Help Meet Sustainable Development Goals" (UNDP) <<https://www.undp.org/saudi-arabia/blog/changing-your-diet-can-help-meet-sustainable-development-goals>> .

⁴Chelsea, "Veganuary: New Report Proves It's the Trend That Keeps on Trending" (Veganuary, June 27, 2023) <<https://veganuary.com/veganuary-2023-in-review/>>

⁵"Veganism" (Sustainable Development Goals - Resource Centre) <<https://sdgresources.relx.com/veganism>>

⁶*Ibid*

⁷Beezhold B and others, "Vegans Report Less Stress and Anxiety than Omnivores" (2014) 18 *Nutritional Neuroscience* 289 <<https://doi.org/10.1179/1476830514y.0000000164>>

considerations inherent in vegetarian and vegan lifestyles, promoting compassion towards animals and environmental sustainability, can foster a sense of purpose and interconnectedness, positively influencing mental and emotional resilience. Thus, a plant-based diet nurtures the physical body and holds promise for cultivating a more holistic and harmonious mental well-being.⁸

In essence, monumental change often stems from seemingly inconsequential steps. These small yet purposeful choices collectively pave the way for significant transformation and sustainable coexistence with our planet.

II. NAVIGATING DIETARY TRANSFORMATIONS: STRIKING A BALANCE FOR OPTIMAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Embarking on a dietary journey is a profound transformation that necessitates a delicate equilibrium. While the initial enthusiasm may prompt drastic measures, an abrupt overhaul of one's diet can adversely affect energy levels, vital functions, and overall bodily homeostasis.⁹ Studies have found that vegan diets fail to meet the suggested daily requirement of nutrients and vitamins, often leading to deficiencies and fatigue.¹⁰ Consequently, individuals turn to supplements, which, in certain instances, may not align with cruelty-free principles due to the inclusion of animal-derived ingredients.¹¹

Complicating matters, deceptive advertising, and misleading campaigns by companies perpetuate the challenge. Instances such as the Papa John's lawsuit, where a vegan customer alleged false marketing regarding a "cheeseless" pizza containing a dairy-derived ingredient, underscore the need for vigilance.¹² Similar legal actions, such as Amul's case against brands claiming to sell "vegan milk," prompted the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to propose a draft notification prohibiting the use of the term "milk" on non-dairy and

⁸Pattar S, Shetty P, and Shetty GB, "Impact of Vegetarian versus Non-Vegetarian Diet on Health Outcomes in Male Individuals: A Comparative Study" (2023) 10 *Advances in Integrative Medicine* 1 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aimed.2023.02.001>>

⁹"Veganism Is a Scam!" (YouTube) <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/NDIJEqB_-3A>

¹⁰Bakaloudi DR and others, "Intake and Adequacy of the Vegan Diet. A Systematic Review of the Evidence" (2021) 40 *Clinical Nutrition* 3503 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clnu.2020.11.035>>

¹¹Admin and Admin, "Are All Multivitamin Tablets Vegetarian? - @healthoktablets" (@healthoktablets, January 19, 2023) <<https://www.mankindhealthok.com/are-all-multivitamin-tablets-vegetarian/>>

¹²Jarvis J, "Papa John's Sparks Vegan Outrage as It Sends 'Real Cheese Instead of Dairy-Free Topping' to Customers | London Evening Standard" *Evening Standard* (January 29, 2019) <<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/papa-johns-sparks-vegan-outrage-as-it-sends-real-cheese-instead-of-dairyfree-topping-to-customers-a4052111.html>>

plant-based dairy product packaging.¹³ The Dairy Pride Act in the U.S. also sought to restrict the use of terms like "milk" or "cheese" in labeling for plant-based alternatives.¹⁴

In the fiercely competitive marketing realm, such cases are not uncommon, underscoring the importance of due diligence to avoid deceptive practices. As veganism gains popularity, some companies misrepresent their products, necessitating consumer awareness and scrutiny. A prudent alternative to complete veganism is transitioning to a lacto-vegetarian diet¹⁵, which includes necessary dairy intake but excludes other animal products. Athletes like DeAndre Jordan, Chris Paul, and David Carter¹⁶ exemplify that individuals at all levels can meet their energy and nutrient requirements through a well-rounded vegetarian diet.¹⁷

Additionally, a stark shift to veganism could have severe repercussions on the livelihoods of farmers and the livestock industry. Managed livestock grazing practices contribute positively to ecosystem health, soil nutrition, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity. To strike a balance between health, sustainability, environmental responsibility, and producer welfare; a lacto-vegetarian diet emerges as a viable and conscientious option.¹⁸

III. A CALL FOR CONSCIOUS ACTION

The determination of dietary preferences ultimately lies within the purview of the individual, underscoring the pivotal role of informed decision-making. Central to this process is education, serving as the foundational cornerstone that enables individuals to explore and comprehend their dietary options thoroughly. Such an exploration can facilitate a thoughtful and personalized approach toward optimal health and well-being.

Commencing this journey may involve gradual shifts, such as transitioning from non-vegetarian meals to embracing either veganism or vegetarianism, depending on individual feasibility and a preference for organic choices. Additionally, such a discerning approach should extend beyond selecting dietary items, encompassing a meticulous examination of every

¹³Bhushan R, "FSSAI Moves to Stop Use of Word 'Milk' on Non-Dairy Products" *The Economic Times* (August 25, 2020) <<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/food/fssai-moves-to-stop-use-of-word-milk-on-non-dairy-products/articleshow/77733858.cms>>

¹⁴Leach T, "Dairy Pride Act Re-Introduced in Effort to Combat Alternative Milk Mislabeling" (*Dairy Herd*, March 3, 2023) <<https://www.dairyherd.com/news/policy/dairy-pride-act-re-introduced-effort-combat-alternative-milk-mislabeling>>

¹⁵Harvard Health, "Becoming a Vegetarian" (*Harvard Health*, April 15, 2020) <<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/becoming-a-vegetarian>>

¹⁶"Who Are the Best Vegetarian and Vegan Athletes in Each Sport? | Evolution Nutrition" <<https://www.evolutionnutrition.com/blog/who-are-best-vegetarian-and-vegan-athletes-each-sport>>

¹⁷"VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN DIETS FOR ATHLETIC TRAINING AND PERFORMANCE" (*Gatorade Sports Science Institute*) <https://www.gssiweb.org/sports-science-exchange/article/vegetarian-and-vegan-diets-for-athletic-training-and-performance#articleTopic_6>

¹⁸Zeldovich L, "Can Cows Help Mitigate Climate Change? Yes, They Can!" [2021] *JSTOR Daily* <<https://daily.jstor.org/can-cows-help-mitigate-climate-change-yes-they-can/>>

product/service purchased. Even ostensibly organic brands may conceal unethical practices in fine print, necessitating vigilant scrutiny to avoid falling prey to misleading advertising. Products often incorporate pesticides and insecticides, masquerading as what they purport to be but lacking genuine value.

Furthermore, it is imperative to recognize that deceptive practices extend beyond food consumption. These discerning practices should be applied universally, spanning dietary choices and extending to every product consumed. Thus, consumers are urged to transcend the herd mentality, refraining from purchasing products based on popular trends or celebrity endorsements. Instead, an informed and conscious decision-making approach should prevail, ensuring that individuals align their choices with their values and contribute to a more ethical and sustainable global marketplace.
