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Bhavini Patel

Month of May for education and awareness of environmental sensitivities/multiple chemical sensitivities

The Effects of Biodiversity on Human Health – Part 2

Biodiversity is crucial for human health as was previously discussed in [Part 1](#) of this article series. A team effort is needed to combat the destruction of biodiversity, and although many companies and groups have attempted to launch campaigns that aim to fulfill this goal, it is at the individual level that change is the most impactful. The following article will discuss a few important solutions that can help protect both local and global biodiversity.

Solution #1 – Buy Local

First, buying local reduces greenhouse gas emissions as transportation distances are much shorter (Ritchie, 2018). The food supply chain is responsible for the emission of copious amounts of greenhouse gases at the level of farming, animal and crop maintenance, processing, transportation, packaging, and retail. Thus, cutting down or shortening these processes can help decrease emissions significantly.

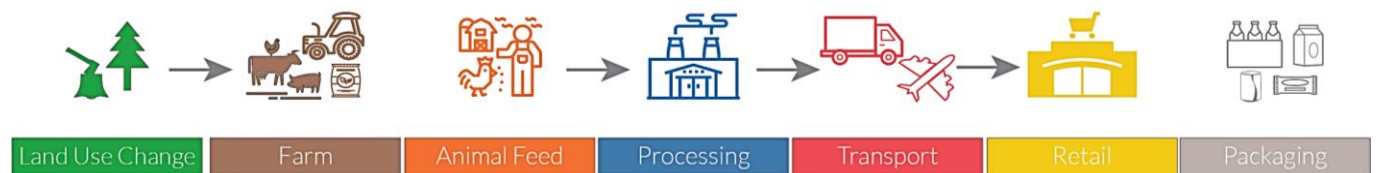


Figure 1 - Food: Greenhouse Gas Emissions Across the Supply Chain (Our World in Data, 2018)

Second, local food is more likely to be fresh than food that needs to travel large distances (Long, 2020). Additionally, locally grown food is much safer for consumption as strict local standards need to be met.

Third, local shopping averts the overexploitation of resources in foreign countries (Crenna et al., 2019). Precisely, meat and agricultural industries have the largest negative impact on



514-332-4320



bureau@aseq-ehaq.ca
office@aseq-ehaq.ca



biodiversity due to overexploitation. These industries also create economic and social conflicts in underdeveloped countries as a result of their business.

Fourth, local products are less likely to come from unpaid or unfairly paid labor. According to a report by *World Vision* (2021), billions of dollars worth of imported foods come from child labor (forced labour being likely) which has only increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report also documents evidence of abuse on laborers and coercion.

Solution #2 – Grow Native Species of Plants

By planting flowers, fruits, and vegetables that are native to your area, you can help support your local wildlife and ecosystem (Scholtens, n.d.). This helps protect local pollinators like bees and hummingbirds who are important in the reproduction and preservation of plant populations. Additionally, native plants require little care and maintenance as they are perfectly adapted to the local environment.

Solution #3 – Use Less Water

Extensive water use is responsible for the exhaustion of freshwater systems (WWF, n.d.). What's more worrying is that freshwater systems make up only 3% of all the water on Earth (97% is salt water). These systems are vital as they house 10% of all known animals and 40% of fish species which constitute major food sources in many countries. Moreover, freshwater systems are required to sustain crops, provide food, and power homes with electricity.

Here are a few ways to reduce your use of water:

- Take shorter showers and use less hot water to save on energy.
- Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth, washing your hands, and shaving.
- Fill in the sink to rinse dishes as opposed to letting the water run continuously.
- Install an option that allows you to flush toilet water in smaller volumes.
- Avoid using the water hose unnecessarily (e.g., watering the driveway).

Solution #4 – Reduce Your Contribution to Landfills

Landfills often affect animals who ravage through them in hopes to find food (Plaza & Lambertucci, 2017). One study found that around 89 species of vertebrates (includes birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals) were negatively affected by garbage dumps. More



specifically, these waste areas increase pathogenesis in these species which can then harm other species populations.

Landfills are also responsible for the release of noxious toxins, habitat loss and degradation, and global warming through carbon dioxide and methane emissions (*Impacts on Biodiversity*, 2012).

Here are ways to reduce your contribution to landfills:

- Avoid buying clothes unnecessarily and donate old clothes instead of throwing them out.
- Avoid buying products in excessive packaging. Choose glass packaging whenever possible.
- Use reusable water bottles, coffee cups/mugs, straws, and utensils.
- Avoid shopping for unneeded items. For example, if your electronic devices are functional, there is truly no need to purchase their latest versions!
- Compost food waste.

Solution #5 – Educate Yourself & Others

The best way to multiply the effects of good habits is by educating yourself and others. Below is a list of ways you can amplify your actions:

- Become active on social media.
 - Follow pages that speak about biodiversity.
 - Share content on your page so that it can reach your family and friends.
- Keep up with the right organizations:
 - International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
 - World Wildlife Fund Canada
 - E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation
 - Nature Conservancy of Canada
 - David Suzuki Foundation
- Watch documentaries on one of your movie nights. Some ideas include:
 - *A Life on Our Planet* – depicts the alarming loss of biodiversity & discusses sustainability



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- *Chasing Coral* – focuses on the disappearance of coral reefs around the world
 - *Cowspiracy* – looks at the solutions to achieve sustainability
 - *Virunga* – centers around wildlife poaching in a biodiverse Congolese national park
 - *Seaspiracy* – focuses on the disastrous impacts of fishing industries around the globe
- Other media you can consume includes books, podcasts, videos, newsletters, blog posts, etc.
 - Start conversations around the topic of biodiversity and share interesting facts to catch people's attention! You'd be surprised at how many people will care about the cause!

"Where the quality of life goes down for the environment, the quality of life goes down for humans."

George Holland

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