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MEDIA RELEASE

Meat Lovers Harm the Environment, their Health and their Pocket

National Vegetarian Week 2008 – 29 September – 5 October

www.vegetarianweek.com.au

Australia's love for meat is having a devastating effect on our environment, with alarming new figures showing a traditional meat diet could create 93 kilograms of greenhouse gas emissions and suck up 24,000 litres of water during production per person each week.^{1,2}

The news isn't much better on the health front, with beefed up dinner menus containing higher levels of saturated fats and a lack of plant foods. Our hip pockets are also being hit hard, with one adult shelving out \$127 a week for a meat heavy eating plan.³

Sanitarium Accredited Practicing Dietitian, Trish Guy says the findings were revealed during a National Vegetarian Week study which modelled three different diets: traditional meat; meat reducer; and vegetarian.

“Consumers are becoming aware that the vegetarian way of eating is the cheapest and best for our environment, but this study paints a complete picture of the difference in the cost to our health, pocket and environment between all three diets,” said Ms Guy.

Vegetarian meals dramatically reduce our environmental footprint, with the plant based diet using significantly less water and producing lower greenhouse gas emissions.^{1,2}

Director of the Australian Vegetarian Society, Mark Berriman said vegetarian meal plans are far less draining on our drought stricken land, using half the water of a traditional meat diet to produce food for one adult each week.

¹ Barry Brook and Geoff Russell. Meat's Carbon Hoofprint. Australasian Science, Nov-Dec: 37-39, 2007.

² AK Chapagain and A.Y.Hoekstra. Water Footprints of nations. Technical report, 2004. <http://www.waterfootprint.org>

³ Shopping at Edgecliff Coles Supermarket on Wednesday July 23rd, all of the recommended foods under each plan were purchased, with a focus on buying the cheapest branded product available.



“Producing one kilogram of meat alone takes more water than that used to cater for a week’s worth of food on the vegetarian diet,” Mr Berriman said. “Greenhouse gas emissions are estimated to be six times lower on a vegetarian diet than traditional meat diets while 12 times less land is cleared for plant based menus.”

Four out of 10 adults are now eating more vegetarian meals, according to new Newspoll research, with the switch in foods providing a welcome boost to their overall health.⁴ A reduced risk of heart disease and protection against cancer are also added benefits of reducing meat and including more plant foods in our diets.

“Plant based menus are high in fibre, antioxidants and protective phytonutrients that may contribute to a decreased risk of cancer and chronic diseases. Plant based diets are also lower in saturated fat, which is beneficial for heart health,” said Ms Guy.

The perception that meat free diets lack the amount of vital nutrients such as protein and iron was also squashed by the study, with the vegetarian diet meeting recommended daily intakes for protein, iron, zinc, vitamin B12, calcium, folate and fibre.

Traditional meat diets are also jacking up the cost at the checkout, with four adults paying almost \$195 per week or just under \$50 per person on meat alone. Introducing several vegetarian meals a week and lowering the amount of meat in our diets will save four adults up to \$90 a week or more than \$22 each.³

Vegetarian diets which are jam-packed with plant based foods are the easiest on the hip pocket.³

For those looking to reduce their meat intake, Ms Guy said the upcoming National Vegetarian Week is the chance they have been waiting for, with various recipes and cooking demonstrations to showcase just how easy it is to make the change and include some meat free meals.

“What harm is there in trying? It’ll work wonders for your health, reduce your weekly bills and help protect the environment. Once people give it a go, they’ll realise just how much flavour and taste there is in vegetarian meals,” said Ms Guy.

National Vegetarian Week 2008, sponsored by Sanitarium Health Food Company and supported by the Australian Vegetable and Potato Growers Federation, runs from 29 September to 5 October.

⁴ Newspoll Survey, “Attitudes towards vegetarian meals”, conducted by phone 23-25th May 2008. 1,204 respondents aged over 18.

The Simple Facts

Traditional Meat Diet	Meat Reducer Diet	Vegetarian Diet
<p><u>Healthy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meat intake in excess of Australian Dietary Guidelines • Almost 50% more saturated fat <p><u>Wealthy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$508 a week for four adults • 20% more at the checkout <p><u>Wise</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 times as much land cleared • 50% more water • More than six times more greenhouse gas emissions 	<p><u>Healthy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks soy products - misses out on health benefits of lower cholesterol levels and protection against heart disease • Provides all essential vitamins and minerals <p><u>Wealthy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saves \$90 per week in reduced meat quantities • \$418 a week for four adults <p><u>Wise</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twice as much greenhouse gas emissions • Twice as much land cleared 	<p><u>Healthy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides all essential vitamins and minerals • Almost 50% lower saturated fat and 25% more fibre and folate • Helps reduce risk of cancer and chronic diseases <p><u>Wealthy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saves 20% at the checkout • \$394 a week for four adults <p><u>Wise</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% less water • 12 times less land cleared • Six times lower greenhouse gas emissions

For more information go to www.vegetarianweek.com.au

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About Sanitarium

Sanitarium's enduring mission is to inspire and resource our community to experience happy, healthy lives. Commencing operations in Melbourne in 1898 Sanitarium remains proudly 100% Australian owned. Sanitarium is one of Australia's most trusted brands and has a reputation for producing quality health foods. Weet-Bix is Australia's No. 1 selling breakfast cereal and So Good, is the leader in the soymilk category.

Sanitarium's Nutrition Service is a free advisory service for consumers and health professionals. Highly trained nutritionists and dietitians provide friendly, helpful unbiased advice and easy to follow recipes to help people make healthy food choices.

For more information about Sanitarium visit www.sanitarium.com.au or they can be contacted on 1800 HEALTH.