

# Climate Crisis

## Brief - March 2023



### Climate Crisis and Food

It will come as no surprise to you that grocery price inflation in the UK hit a fresh record high of 16.7% in the four weeks to 22 January, adding almost £800 to the typical annual food bill, along with the increased use of food banks. The Ukraine war has been a significant factor having a big impact on farm fossil fuel prices, with the knock-on to nitrate fertiliser prices rising 300%.

Coupled with this we have seen empty shelves and rationing by supermarkets including eggs, salad crops and vegetables. A factor here, in respect of our imports of season crops, has been the climate extremes, including intense night frosts and drought in Spain and North Africa, coupled with the Brexit hassle and documentation associated with exporting to the UK.

Disease has also played its part with the impact of a tomato virus in Spain, and of course, the ongoing avian flu outbreak impacting on our chicken and egg production.

The problems that we have with our broken UK food system go far beyond a few shortages and rising prices. Coupled with 40% wastage of food in our system is the UK being the fatman of the EU with over 60% of the population being obese or overweight and consuming 2500 calories per day. In addition to obesity other food related diseases include diabetes, cardiovascular disease (CVD) and antibiotic resistance linked to the fact that 80% of antibiotics in the UK is fed to animals. According to analysis of McCance and Widdowson there has been a significant decline in the mineral nutrient content of our food with an associated impact on our physical and mental health. On the Farming side over the last 50 years or so, we have seen a 50-70% loss of soil organic carbon in arable land along with the associated releases of further greenhouse gases, and the ability to retain rain water and hence impact on increased flooding. There has been a 50% decline in farmland birds. Measuring farming efficiency, today we require 25 times more fossil fuels to produce a calorie of food than we did 80 years ago. And we are only 60% self-sufficiency in our food and that is declining.

Clearly, there are some big issues with our broken food system, and there is little indication that our government will be addressing them anytime soon.

There are a few actions that we all might wish to consider taking to our own benefit that address these systemic problems:

- **Grow your own** in gardens, allotments, urban horticulture - utilising green spaces in our towns and cities. University of Sheffield has demonstrated that if 10% of the land available for urban horticulture in the city of Sheffield was put into production, then it could feed 15% of the city's population the five a day, diet recommended by the World Health Organization. Thus contribute to the fossil free/eco-friendly production of healthy food that rebuilds our soils.

- **Cook your own** from raw ingredients . Minimising consumption of convenience and pre-prepared foods that contain saturated fats, highly processed meats and refined carbohydrates, often devoid of vital micronutrients yet packed with a cocktail of chemical additives including colourings, flavourings and preservatives.

#### **Buy Food that is:**

- **Fresh** - reduces the fossil fuel requirement for refrigeration, transportation, processing, preservatives and packaging.
- **Local** from farm shops, farmers markets - reduces transport fossil fuel use- aviation, shipping, trucking, increases accountability for landscape and pollution impacts, increases the opportunity for closing the carbon cycle.
- **Seasonal** - reduces fossil fuel use for heating and lighting used for out of season forced growing.
- **"Organic"** - No fossil fuel intensive fertilizers (particularly nitrates), nor pesticides, reduced antibiotics - benefits to our health.
- **Beef, lamb, dairy, meat** etc- Grain free (fossil fuels use for growing) & Soya-Free (GM and deforestation) and 100% Pasture fed - carbon capture and biodiversity benefits.

The benefits to our personal health, mitigating the Climate Crisis, animal welfare, costs to NHS, flood defence, food resilience, balance of payments, creating worthwhile local jobs - just to mention a few - all go without saying!!

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#### **Residents are welcome to join our Grimley Parish Council climate crisis working party.**

The working party was set up by the parish council in late 2021 and consists of residents and parish councillors. The group works broadly within the remit of the climate declaration made by the parish council in 2008. The articles released by the group chair Cllr Dave Stanley are published at his own expense in the local parish magazine (and in the Worcester News (local newspaper)), are not voted upon by the councillors and are included on the parish council website in order to provoke thought and debate and encourage residents to educate themselves on the topics included.

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