

## Vegan Education in Schools

### Ethics course

### Years 7 to 12

#### **Lesson 7: The environmental impact of animal agriculture: Deforestation, water usage, greenhouse gas emissions**

##### **Overview:**

This lesson explores the environmental destruction caused by animal agriculture, focusing on deforestation, water consumption, and greenhouse gas emissions. Through data analysis, multimedia content, and abolitionist critique, students will gain a deep understanding of why veganism is a necessity - not a choice - in the fight for environmental justice. The lesson also dismantles the myth of 'sustainable meat', exposing it as a comforting lie rooted in speciesism and ecological denial.

##### **Objectives:**

- Understand the link between animal agriculture and climate collapse
- Analyse deforestation, water use, and emissions statistics
- Debunk 'greenwashed' narratives like local, grass-fed, or regenerative meat
- Connect ecological breakdown with the commodification of animals
- Advocate for veganism as an abolitionist environmental solution

##### **Outcomes:**

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Articulate key environmental harms caused by animal agriculture
- Use accurate data to expose unsustainable systems of animal exploitation
- Critically challenge myths about sustainable meat
- Communicate the case for veganism as a necessity for planetary survival
- Engage in solution-focused environmental advocacy

##### **Materials:**

- Whiteboard and markers
- Projector and speakers

- Internet-enabled computer or smartboard
- Printed handouts: source summaries, myth-busting worksheet, reflection prompts
- Student notebooks or digital journals
- Access to the following digital resources:
  - Video: [How Animal Agriculture Contributes to Climate Change](#) - NowThis Earth
  - Video: [Is Grazing Animals Good for the Environment?](#) - Earthling Ed
  - Article: [How Does Agriculture Cause Deforestation?](#) - Sentient Media
  - PDF: [Water Footprints of Foods - Water Footprint Network](#) (Hoekstra, 2008)
  - Infographic: [If the world adopted a plant-based diet](#) - Our World in Data
  - Article: [The Facts](#) - Climate Healers

### Lesson steps:

#### 1. Introduction - Connecting your plate to the planet (5 minutes):

- Ask students: “What do animal products have to do with burning forests and drying rivers?”
- Write three focus areas on the board: **Deforestation, Water Use, GHG Emissions**
- Set the tone: “Today we’re learning how animal agriculture is destroying the planet - and what we can do to stop it.”

#### 2. Video - Exposing the impact (6 minutes):

- Play: [How Animal Agriculture Contributes to Climate Change](#) - NowThis Earth
- Prompt discussion or video response worksheet:
  - What environmental issues are caused by animal agriculture?
  - Why don’t more people talk about this?
  - How does this relate to justice?

#### 3. Data stations - Deforestation, water, emissions (10 minutes):

- Students work in 3 groups. Each uses one of the following resources:

- **Group A: Deforestation**  
<http://sentientmedia.org/how-does-agriculture-cause-deforestation/>
- **Group B: Water Use**  
<https://www.waterfootprint.org/resources/Hoekstra-2008-WaterfootprintFood.pdf>
- **Group C: Emissions**  
<https://climatehealers.org/the-science/the-facts/>

- Students pull out 3 key data points and present back to class

#### 4. Debunking 'sustainable meat' - Audio-visual + discussion (10 minutes):

- Play: [Is Grazing Animals Good for the Environment?](#) - Earthling Ed
- Students complete a quick myth-debunking sheet with claims like:
  - "Grass-fed beef is better for the planet"
  - "Local meat is environmentally friendly"
  - "Regenerative grazing heals the land"
- Class discussion:
  - What's the core message of Ed's video?
  - Why is "ethical meat" a dangerous myth?
  - What does environmental justice actually look like?

#### 5. Visualising the vegan solution (10 minutes):

- Show: [If the world adopted a plant-based diet](#) - Our World in Data
- Discuss:
  - What could we reforest or rewild with land freed from animal farming?
  - How does a vegan world restore the environment and respect animals?

#### 6. Exit reflection (5 minutes):

- Students write or share:
  - "The most important truth I learned today is..."
  - "A plant-based world would mean..."

**Homework:**

- Reflective writing (400–500 words): “Why veganism is not just a dietary preference but an environmental obligation”.
  - Include data from at least two sources used in class
  - Must directly reject the idea of ‘sustainable animal products’

**Extension:**

- Create a mini-campaign: video, TikTok, infographic, or poster exposing the environmental cost of animal agriculture and calling for vegan action
- Advanced students may research: “How land used for animal grazing contributes to Indigenous dispossession and biodiversity loss”

**Differentiation:**

- Visual summaries, scaffolded handouts, and sentence starters for EAL/D
- Oral or video reflections in place of written homework
- Challenge task: Write a rebuttal to a pro ‘sustainable meat’ article using today’s sources

**Assessment criteria:**

- Demonstrates understanding of environmental impact of animal farming
- Uses accurate statistics to support points
- Critically challenges misleading environmental narratives
- Presents abolitionist veganism as a necessary ecological action
- Communicates ideas clearly and thoughtfully