

# Schnitzel is bad for the environment

August 16 2011

---



A healthy diet: Less meat, more fruit and vegetables

If you want to protect the environment, you should first of all think about eating less meat. An Austrian study done at the Vienna University of Technology (TU Vienna) unveils the remarkable ecological advantages of a well-balanced diet. Switching to organic food is less effective than eating more veg.

Everybody knows what a [healthy diet](#) would look like: Lots of cereal, [potatoes](#) and rice, plenty of vegetables and only a little meat. Still, most of us eat excessive amounts of sausages and [meat products](#). This does not only harm us, but the environment too. Together with an interdisciplinary team of scientists, Professor Matthias Zessner from the TU Vienna has now tried to find out, what it would mean for the environment, if people switched to a healthier diet. The result: it would help to save resources and cultivable land. Eating [organic food](#) has less

far-reaching consequences. If you want to benefit yourself and the environment, eating fruit and vegetables turns out to be much more important than going organic.

In Austria, 3600 square meters of [soil](#) are needed to feed the average person. Matthias Zessner calculated, how this would change if people adhered to official nutrition guidelines. The [meat consumption](#) would have to be reduced by half, the consumption of vegetables and cereal would increase. “This would not only lower cancer rates and reduce the number of cardiovascular diseases, the area required for the production of food would be reduced from 3600 square meters to 2600 square meters per person”, Matthias Zessner says. A healthier diet would also reduce energy consumption in food production, and considerably less fertilizer would be needed. Our carbon dioxide emissions would decrease as well – a well-balanced diet would save a third of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases in food production.

Switching to organic food on the other hand, is not necessarily a good solution. Organic food production needs less fertilizer, but as the production intensity is lower, it requires even larger areas. Switching to organic food production would therefore even exacerbate the problem of limited cultivable land, increasing the dependence on food imports.

Provided by Vienna University of Technology

Citation: Schnitzel is bad for the environment (2011, August 16) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-08-schnitzel-bad-environment.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.