



## THE SECOND POPULATION EXPLOSION

There is much concern about the rapidly increasing human population, but few people realise that there is a second population explosion - that of livestock animals that compete with humans for land, water, plant foods, energy, human labour and research facilities. Cattle *"take up nearly 24% of the land mass of the planet and consume enough grain to feed hundreds of millions of people"* (The Geographical Magazine, July 1992).

Livestock animals meet no human needs that cannot be met more economically direct from plants, not even soil fertilisers.

For over 50 years the vegan experiment, well checked by scientific investigation, has shown that plant foods alone can maintain human health from conception to vigorous old age. It is now generally recognised that plant foods, which are high in fibre, are protective against hardening of the arteries, coronary heart disease, diabetes mellitus, diverticulitis and cancer of the colon. A recent investigation of many thousand Chinese peasants who are vegan or almost vegan because there is not enough land for them to be anything else, revealed that very few suffer from anaemia, osteoporosis or coronary diseases.

Similarly, the health of the soils can be maintained and good crops grown with plant compost, plant liquid fertilisers and green manuring techniques. Animal manure and slaughterhouse products are not necessary for plant health.

**METHANE:** *"Methane is 20 - 30 times more efficient than CO<sub>2</sub> in trapping heat. Within 50 years it may be the most significant greenhouse gas."* (p.23, World Resources Institute Report 1991, in collaboration with the UN Environment and UN Development Programme).

*"Cattle, sheep and other ruminants are a major source of the gas, greater than rice paddies and gas pipe leakages."* (Ibid., p.346).

*"Methane is a precursor to reactions that destroy ozone in the stratosphere."* (New Scientist article, 24.3.1988). This statement is corroborated by James Lovelock CBE in his book "Gaia, the Practical Science of Planetary Medicine", 1991 - p.169, and by Gerard Piel, founder and editor of "The Scientific American", in "Only One World", pub. 1992 - p.84.

Animal farming should stop and the vast areas of land released given to trees.

**TREES** take in CO<sub>2</sub> and store the carbon in their wood. If enough trees were grown, global warming could be checked, even reversed.

**AT THE SAME TIME** trees maintain water tables and water cycles. Their roots search deep into the earth and draw up water that might otherwise sink beyond recall. Their leaves transpire it into the air whence it falls as rain. Leafy canopies break the fall of rain so that the water seeps through the forest debris to replenish the tables. Rain rushes down bare hillsides

carrying precious topsoil with it. Shelterbelts of trees also check the soil erosion caused by wind. Trees can hold back and regenerate deserts.

AT THE SAME TIME trees can yield everything that humans really need, everything we use except the minerals taken directly from the earth. Wood is the fuel of most of the world's people. It can be burned in efficient stoves with a minimum of waste and pollution. It can be converted into gas, electricity and liquid fuel. When the wood is so used, the carbon is returned to the air, but no more than the trees took in, and if young trees are planted as soon as mature ones are felled, the forest unit is a permanent sink for carbon.

FOOD. Trees can yield abundant food: luscious fruits for energy, vitamins and minerals, and nuts and other seeds for protein. The hazels, beeches and oaks that once nearly covered many parts of Great Britain yielded far more protein than the sheep and cattle that now graze them. In other parts of the world there are many species of high yielding bean trees as well as many different kinds of nut and fruit trees.

A future for our children depends on restoring forests worldwide. The people of the industrially developed areas have no moral right to criticise the felling of the tropical forests unless they restore those in their own land: many were felled to make way for the grazing animals which have ever since prevented their regeneration. Much study needs to be done to get the right mixture of trees. Monocultures grown for short-term profit must be avoided. Special attention will need to be given to the possible effects of global warming on tree growth. It can be done but time is not on our side. Everyone can help by refusing to use the products of the second population explosion and by spreading understanding of the facts given above.

For further information, see MCL's booklets *"Abundant Living in the Coming Age of the Tree"* and *"Growing Our Own"* available on the Publications page of the MCL website.

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