



If you're like me, you like meat. Especially red meat, like a pepper-crusted steak or a juicy burger drizzled with bleu cheese. But if you're also like me, you're concerned about climate change and the impact that our lifestyle has on the planet. While hybrids and CFL light bulbs get a lot of attention, [Ezra Klein rightly points](#) out that cutting back on meat would have a significant impact on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It's not just that cows burp up methane, a powerful GHG (which is a big problem: over [half of all GHGs from California agriculture](#) come from methane). It's the emissions from our entire industrial food system that goes into that meat.

To feed cows, the United States has turned whole regions into monoculture mania, growing scientifically-engineered corn at dense volumes and high yields. To grow this corn, agribusiness produces industrial fertilizer, with a production, transportation, and application process that all emit significant levels of GHGs. (According to [Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*](#), the use of petrochemical fertilizers became widespread after World War II, when we had a lot of extra bomb-making chemicals lying around that needed a profitable use.) Then the cows are fed the processed corn in concentrated feed lots, which is not compatible with their digestive systems that were adapted for grass. Hence: more methane burping and much illness and cow suffering. Finally, after being fed antibiotics, their increasingly shorter (i.e. more profitable) lives come to an end at the slaughterhouse. They're nicely packaged and delivered to your supermarket, where you'd hardly know what the animal looked like in the first place or that each feedlot cow requires [over 200 gallons of oil](#) to produce.

Given the bovine and GHG horror of it all, what can meat-eaters do? [Klein](#) suggests cutting back on meat:

The pity of it is that compared with cars or appliances or heating your house, eating pasta on a night when you'd otherwise have made fajitas is easy.

This is a simple solution that oddly enough the [major environmental groups seem not to want to push](#). After all, for those of you who, like me, love your meats, how hard is it to reduce consumption? (Full disclosure/excuse: I have a food allergy to legumes so the vegetarian lifestyle would be impossible for me.)

Another option is to make sure, if possible, to eat only grass-fed beef. Cows that eat grass are healthier and happier, and by not eating corn, these cows are not contributing as much GHG emissions from our industrial food system.

So if you want to dig into that delicious tri-tip, rubbed in seasoning salt and olive oil and barbecued to a crisp exterior with a juicy center, and you don't want the climate change guilt, just make sure it's a rare event (pun intended) and grass-fed to boot.

(There are of course other valuable reasons for not eating meat, but this is LegalPlanet, not AnimalPlanet or HinduPlanet.)