

Brussels, 3rd December 2009

Dear Sir/Madam,

As you are certainly aware, the world – and especially the developed countries – has to take significant and urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We have no doubt that you have already taken concrete steps to mitigate climate change. However, we would like to bring to your attention an option that you may have not yet considered.

Worldwide, meat production is responsible for no less than 18% of total greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions through meat production and associated land-use changes are one of the most important causes of climate change. Yet people, especially in high-income societies, continue to eat large amounts of meat. This high meat intake not only has negative effects on the climate and biodiversity, it is also harmful for our health because it increases the risk of cardio-vascular disease, obesity, diabetes and other diseases of affluence. Hence, it is very important to limit our meat consumption.

Because our food, and especially meat consumption, is such a significant cause of greenhouse gas emissions, the most powerful resource we have in the fight against climate change may very well be... our forks. Each time you eat a vegetarian meal instead of a meat-based meal, you contribute to mitigation of emissions of greenhouse gases. So skipping the meat now and then is a good recipe against climate change.

Local governments can certainly play a role in helping citizens to reduce their intake of meat and other animal products. We would like to bring to your attention the campaigns for weekly meatless days that are appearing in different parts of the world. Notably in the case of the city of Ghent, Belgium, such a campaign was carried out in partnership between an NGO and the city government. Together they have distributed maps of the city highlighting vegetarian eateries, how-to brochures for restaurants and changed the menu in city restaurants. Ghent has also introduced a weekly vegetarian day in all 35 city schools, an initiative which has also been enacted in schools in the city of Baltimore, USA. Similar programmes have recently started in São Paulo, Brazil and Hasselt, Belgium and other cities are considering following suit. In the UK, the Meat Free Monday campaign is encouraging people to discover the

benefits of eating less meat. The Swedish government has also produced guidelines on healthy and climate-friendly eating which include a recommendation for meat reduction.

Individuals can only do so much. It is also the responsibility of governments and industries to ensure that sustainable alternatives like plant-based products are widely available and affordable. Several alternative policies and options could lead to lower consumption of meat and climate-friendly lifestyles. Cities like Ghent, São Paulo or Baltimore have provided a menu of actions that could be more widely adopted, and it is for communities and governments to decide how to implement them. We both are appealing to leaders at the national and local levels to ensure that concrete steps are taken in this direction.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Rajendra Pachauri



Sir Paul McCartney