

Food Is Climate

Guest post by [Glen Merzer, MainStreetVegan.net](http://MainStreetVegan.net)

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My first opportunity to write about nutrition came in 1996, when Simon & Schuster engaged Howard Lyman and me to turn his story into the book that became *Mad Cowboy: Plain Truth From the Cattle Rancher Who Won't Eat Meat* [Barnes & Noble].

I had never before written a nonfiction book, nor even published a nonfiction article, and I had no credentials in the field of nutrition. While Howard and I were planning on telling his personal story, we also intended to present data about health conditions related to diet, as we had promised the publisher in an outline. Simon & Schuster was banking on my ability to conduct research—an ability I had never previously demonstrated. I knew nothing more about nutritional studies than your average vegetarian or vegan who has heard that meat causes heart attacks.

Conducting research was more labor-intensive at the time than it is now. Google hadn't yet been invented. I actually spent several days poring through old medical journals at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and at UCLA's medical library. While I learned a few things about how to use a medical library, the nutritional studies that I "discovered" on their shelves were generally unsurprising and readily accessible.

Nutrition is considered such a controversial field that I was expecting to find conflicting and ambiguous data. Probably, if I had looked long and hard enough, I could have found some data that conflicted with everything else I was reading—but I would have had to have looked *really* long and hard, because all of the data was one-sided and unambiguous.

Humans become healthier, in all sorts of ways, when they eat more fruits and vegetables. They become unhealthier, in all sorts of ways, when they eat flesh foods, eggs, and dairy. There were a million studies on the health benefits of fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, and legumes, and none on the health benefits of roast beef or fried chicken.

You didn't have to be a scientist to report the obvious.



Photo permission of Chef AJ

I went on to co-author more books on diet and nutrition with Chef AJ, who is not a doctor but clearly has read and absorbed more about nutrition than most doctors will ever know, as anyone can readily discover by tuning into [her YouTube channel](#).

Early this year, I was working on another book advocating the plant-based diet when I decided to include a chapter on climate. Now *that* seemed daunting at first; I'm not a physicist and I'm not a climatologist. But I had come across [a study by Dr. Sailesh Rao](#) that attributed 87% of greenhouse gases to animal agriculture—87%! If that was true, or even anywhere *near* true, we were being misled (consciously or not) by Al Gore and all the other climate leaders who focused almost exclusively on fossil fuels. Could it possibly be the case that the only way to reverse climate change had to do not with solar panels, LED lightbulbs, and carpooling, but changing the food on our plate?

My chapter outgrew the book it was planned for, and became its own book: [*Food Is Climate: A Response to Al Gore, Bill Gates, Paul Hawken, & The Conventional Narrative on Climate Change*](#). And once again the science turned out to be more accessible than I would have guessed. It comes down to common sense. Climate change is the result of the *accumulation* of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Solar panels, LED lightbulbs, and carpooling may reduce slightly the *rate* of accumulation, but if all we do is slow down the rate at which the planet is heating, we are still cooked.

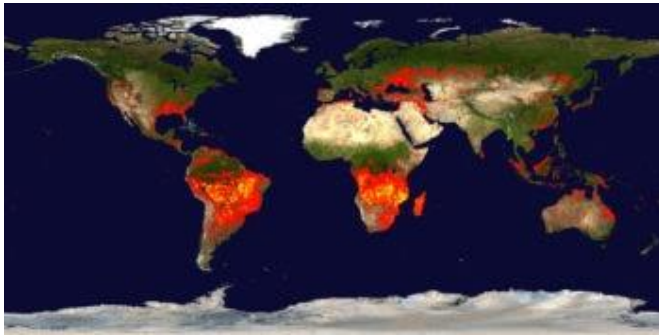


Image credit: [NASA's Worldview application](#), part of NASA's Earth Observing System Data and Information System (EOSDIS)

We need to *reverse* atmospheric heating. Solar panels do not sequester carbon dioxide. Trees do. Sea plants do. We need to protect the oceans and to reforest as much of the world as we can.

How do we protect the oceans? By ending industrial fishing.

What part of the world can we reforest? Clearly not our towns and cities. The great opportunity is the grazing land, which occupies close to 40% of the world's non-ice land surface. If we end animal agriculture, we can add at least a trillion trees, while drastically reducing the methane and nitrous oxide emissions from (now) more than twenty-five billion farmed animals.

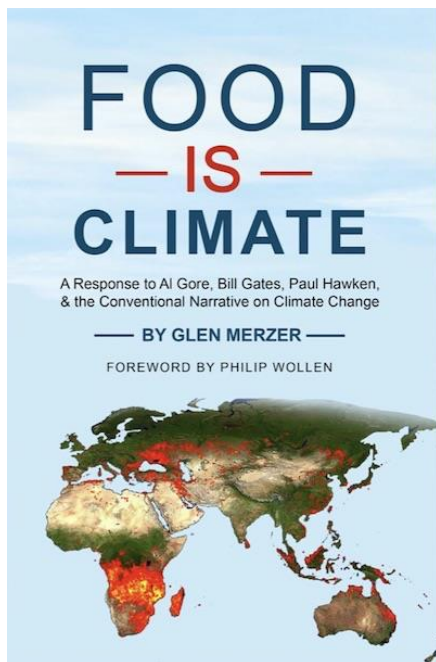
And so the answer to the climate crisis is the same as the formula for human health: eat plants, not animals.

I don't see it as a coincidence.



Photo credit: Robert Merrill

Glen Merzer is a playwright, screenwriter, and author. He has authored or co-authored eleven books with a vegan message. His latest book, *Food Is Climate: A Response to Al Gore, Bill Gates, Paul Hawken, & The Conventional Narrative on Climate Change*, argues that the only way to reverse climate change is to put an end to animal agriculture.



Glen began his career in book-writing as co-author, with Howard Lyman, of *Mad Cowboy* (1998). Glen is also co-author of *The Secrets to Ultimate Weight Loss* (2018) and *Unprocessed* (2011) by Chef AJ, as well as other books advocating plant-based eating. In 2020, Glen wrote *Own Your Health* (The Book Publishing Company), to which Chef AJ contributed over 75 recipes. Glen grew up in Bellmore, New York, and attended New College of Florida in Sarasota. You can find him at www.glenmerzer.com.