

THE IMPACT OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS ON CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING



Global Compact
Network Poland



Know-How Hub
Centrum Transferu Wiedzy



THE IMPACT OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS ON CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING



Network Poland



OUR MISSION:
**MOBILIZE A GLOBAL
MOVEMENT
OF SUSTAINABLE
COMPANIES
AND STAKEHOLDERS
TO CREATE
THE WORLD
WE WANT**

THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT



HUMAN RIGHTS

- 1 Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and
- 2 make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.



LABOUR

- 3 Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- 4 the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;
- 5 the effective abolition of child labour; and
- 6 the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.



ENVIRONMENT

- 7 Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;
- 8 undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and
- 9 encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.



ANTI-CORRUPTION

- 10 Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

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Food is life. But in countries, communities and households in every corner of the world, this essential need – this human right – is going unfulfilled. Every day, hundreds of millions of people go to bed hungry. Children are starving. Three billion people cannot afford a healthy diet. Two billion are overweight or obese. 462 million are underweight. And nearly one-third of all food that is produced is lost or wasted. We must build a world where healthy and nutritious food is available and affordable for everyone, everywhere.

Yet we know the challenge before us. It is not new. At the same time, we are waging a war against nature – and reaping the bitter harvest. Ruined crops, dwindling incomes and failing food systems. Food systems also generate one-third of all greenhouse gas emissions and they're responsible for up to 80 per cent of biodiversity loss. At the same time, food systems can and must play a leading role in addressing all of these challenges to realise the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

António Guterres

Secretary-General of the United Nations
Chair of the UN Global Compact Board

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Reducing carbon emissions and protecting biodiversity makes companies more resilient to shocks, more relevant to society and more valuable to investors

We had science on our side: we could point to rising greenhouse gas emissions, overconsumption, the destruction of natural habitats, the loss of biodiversity. We could even point to clear wins – greater efficiency, reduced climate risks – for businesses investing in sustainability. But we could not show conclusively that markets reward sustainable companies more than carbon-intensive ones. There are enormous opportunities for the private sector in the transition to a sustainable, climate-safe future. These exist not only in new sectors such as renewable energy and electric vehicles, but also in bringing sustainable practices and innovations to traditional ones like agriculture and manufacturing.

Sanda Ojiambo

Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations Global Compact, CEO & Executive Director UN Global Compact



INTRODUCTORY DATA

As a result of drought and desertification, we lose 12 million hectares (23 hectares per minute) every year where 20 million tonnes of grain could be grown¹.



69%

Agriculture (including irrigation, livestock and aquaculture) is by far the largest consumer of water, accounting for 69% of annual water extraction worldwide. Industry (including energy) accounts for 19% and households for 12%².



about five billion hectares

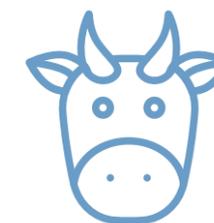
The area of agricultural land in the world is about five billion hectares, or 38% of the global land area. About a third of this is used as arable land, and the remaining two-thirds are meadows and pastures for grazing livestock³.



While livestock occupies most of the world's agricultural land, it provides only 18 percent of calories and 37 percent of protein to the world's human population⁴.

57%

Emissions from animal husbandry account for around 57% of greenhouse gas emissions in the food sector globally⁵.



44%

Around 44% of emissions from farming are in the form of methane (CH₄). The rest is nitrous oxide (N₂O, 29 percent) and carbon dioxide (CO₂, 27 percent)⁶.



The FAO estimates that 45% of livestock emissions come from feed production, and a further 39% from enteric fermentation – methane produced in the digestive tract of ruminants such as cattle, sheep and goats. Another 10% is attributed to the storage and use of manure. The remainder is accounted for by the processing and transport of animal products⁷.

8%

Polish agriculture is responsible for about 8% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions⁸.



The food sector accounts for about 30 percent of total global energy consumption and for about 22 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions⁹.

INTRODUCTORY DATA

1 billion 300 million tonnes

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reports that 1 billion 300 million tonnes of edible food is wasted every year in the world, which is one third of the food already produced¹⁰.

5 mln tonnes

In Poland, almost **5 million tonnes** of food is wasted annually. Of this, **60%** comes from households; **15.6%** from processing; **15.5%** from agricultural production, **6.96%** from trade, **1.17%** from food service and **0.65%** from transport¹¹.

3,3 bln tonnes

The carbon footprint of food waste is estimated at **3.3 billion tonnes** of CO₂ equivalent of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere per year¹².



A small percentage of all food waste is composted: most of it ends up in landfills and makes up a large proportion of municipal solid waste. Methane emissions from landfills are one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the waste sector¹³.

More than **3 billion** people worldwide do not have access to a healthy diet. Nearly **690 million** people are affected by hunger, and **2 billion** consume an unhealthy diet that causes micronutrient deficiencies and contributes to a significant increase in the incidence of diet-related obesity and other diet-related diseases such as coronary artery disease, stroke and diabetes¹⁴.



TOO MUCH FOOD IS BEING LOST OR WASTED IN EVERY COUNTRY EVERY DAY¹⁵



13.3%

OF THE WORLD'S FOOD IS LOST AFTER HARVESTING AND BEFORE REACHING RETAIL MARKETS



17%

OF TOTAL FOOD IS WASTED AT THE CONSUMER LEVEL

- <https://www.un.org/pl/cel15>
- WWAP (UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme). 2019. The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019: Leaving No One Behind. Paris, UNESCO.
- <https://www.fao.org/sustainability/news/detail/en/c/1274219/>
- <https://ourworldindata.org/global-land-for-agriculture>
- <https://pl.boell.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Atlas%20mi%C4%99sa.pdf>
- <https://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/197623/icode/>
- Gerber, P.J., Steinfeld, H., Henderson, B., Mottet, A., Opio, C., Dijkman, J., Faluccci, A. & Tempio, G. 2013. Tackling climate change through livestock – A global assessment of emissions and mitigation opportunities. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome.
- <https://www.gov.pl/web/rolnictwo/emisje-gazow-cieplarnianych-ghg-z-rolnictwa>
- <https://www.fao.org/3/i2454e/i2454e.pdf>
- <https://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/196402/icode/>
- <https://www.nik.gov.pl/aktualnosci/przepisy-do-poprawki-wciaz-za-duzo-zywnosci-trafia-do-smieci.html>
- <https://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/196402/icode/>
- <https://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/196402/icode/>
- FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2022. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable. Rome, FAO.
- <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2022.pdf>

Summary

The United Nations General Assembly clearly stresses that “food is a requisite for human survival and well-being and a fundamental human necessity”. Physiological needs, including the need to eat, are at the very bottom of the Maslow’s pyramid, meaning that they dominate other needs and determine human behavior. However, in addition to satisfying the need to eat, we should also be paying attention to what we are eating, as a well-balanced diet exerts a positive impact on our health and well-being.

Agriculture and food production are one of those sectors of the economy that is most acutely threatened by climate change. The increase in global temperature, compared to the pre-industrial era, brings about a number of consequences, such as extreme weather, high air temperatures, drought, torrential rains and flooding. Although prolonged vegetation periods may be expected in some geographical areas, other will suffer from desertification and a resulting loss of ecosystems and biodiversity. Such phenomena will render the growing of plants and the breeding of animals impossible, and the land itself will become uninhabitable for humans.

Agricultural and food sectors considerably impact the environment and the Earth’s climate as well. Farming is the largest consumer of water resources among all sectors of the economy. Irrigation, aquacultures and livestock production all deplete drinking water resources that are highly limited globally. Only 1% of surface and groundwaters are suitable for potential use by humans.

50% of all land suitable for living is used for agricultural processes. Monoculture farming and intensive crop production depletes soil, leading to lower yields, as well as to more intensive use of pesticides and herbicides in farming. Erosion of soil, contamination of groundwaters and their lower levels are the additional factors that deepen the destructive impact of this particular sector of the economy on the environment and biodiversity.

IPCC reports clearly state that the increase in greenhouse gas emissions contributes to climate change that is unfolding in front of our very eyes. Importantly, the food sector is responsible for approximately 30% of global energy consumption and approximately 22% of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions. Production of food generates significant amounts of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide – gases that are the largest greenhouse effect contributors. More than half of all greenhouse gas emissions generated in the course of food production processes are of animal origin. In Poland, the agricultural sector is responsible for approximately 8% of domestic greenhouse gas emissions, and volumes generated in the course of livestock production have been growing steadily over the past years, reflecting the increase in production and average per capita consumption of meat in Poland. Surveys and reports serve as a valuable source of knowledge about consumers’ nutritional habits and their purchasing decisions.

Below are the key conclusions that may be drawn based on the results of a survey conducted by IBRIS to the order of Upfield Polska, entitled “Climate change vs. food production – a survey assessing the awareness of Poles”:

The respondents declare a high level of climate change awareness. It is worth considering, however, whether such a declaration may be deemed merely a response to the prevailing expectations of the society. Although the majority of respondents declare to be interested in information concerning climate change, 35% of them follow the latest in this regard only superficially. Furthermore, one in two of the surveyed admits that their environmental awareness is mediocre, and one in twenty that it is low. It is also worth noting that knowledge about climate-related processes and the condition of the planet is sourced by respondents primarily from television and the Internet, although only one in five of the surveyed considers those sources of information to be trustworthy and reliable. Similar results are obtained in surveys concerning climate awareness, and a clear dissonance between the declared and actual knowledge of Poles concerning climate change may be observed¹.

The surveyed are aware – or at least they declare so – that the climate of the Earth is changing. Furthermore, they mainly blame human activity for the processes that are taking place currently. They also seem to be aware that their daily decisions and activities impact the condition of the planet and try to act bearing the outcomes of their choices in mind. Furthermore, nearly 7 in 10 respondents would like to find out more on how to prevent climate change on their own. Although the declarative willingness to do something to help the planet is considerable, a certain dissonance may be observed here. A deep dive into the results of the survey shows that only 26% of the respondents are on a diet that is rich in plant-based products. An average Pole has rather standard nutritional habits. 73% of the respondents stated that they eat both animal- and plant-based products. Although nearly all of the surveyed state that the condition of the environment is important to them, only one in four respondents on a traditional diet would be willing to give up eating meat and dairy if such a change was to contribute to mitigating adverse climate changes. The results of the survey have shown that such a step would be more likely taken by those with a higher level of environmental awareness, by people closely following climate-related news and being concerned about the outcome of climate change. This means that a more extensive knowledge and a higher level of environmental awareness translate into willingness to take action intended to mitigate negative consequences and processes related to climate change. Other surveys² have shown that the number of those modifying their diet in order to protect the environment is growing. Such attempts may be encouraged by an ever-expanding selection of plant-based products available in stores and by increased availability of plant-based alternatives of meat dishes. Young people were

¹ Earthlings on the Attack 2020, Kantar Polska, Twenty Twenties and UN Global Compact Network Poland, august 2020, N=1000.

² <https://www.msc.org/pl/>.

Summary

more inclined to give up or reduce their meat consumption. The lack of willingness to limit the amount of meat eaten is more prevalent in males.

Results of the survey also indicate that willingness to take better care of the environment and the planet is seldom considered to be a stimulus for changing nutritional habits. The lack of willingness to switch to a diet that is richer in plant-based products may be related to the fact that despite being aware of the negative impact of food production on climate, the surveyed attribute it primarily to large scale processes, such as deforestation, generation of energy from fossil fuels or improper waste management. The following conclusion may be drawn: only few of the respondents shopping for groceries wonder about the impact of their decisions on the planet - such reflections are reported only by one in ten respondents. The key factors that determine our product choices continue to be the same: ingredients, place of manufacture or price. It is worth noting, however, that 68% of those respondents who are aware of and concerned with progressing climate change declared their willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products. The higher the level of climate awareness, the more informed the purchasing decisions.

Some trends indicative of an increase in the level of Poles' environmental awareness may be noticed, but these are not followed by change in our purchasing decisions and nutritional choices. Willing not to harm the planet, the surveyed usually recycle waste and try to reduce their consumption of plastics or water. Their environmentally-oriented efforts are often forced by applicable legal regulations. The society tends to comply with legal requirements. As far as ecology is concerned, Poles tend to follow certain patterns. However, as a society, we still remain oblivious to the interdependencies existing in the environment and to the impact (both positive and negative) that our consumer decisions may exert on climate change. Plastic pollution, smog and air quality are the paramount environmental challenges noted by the surveyed. Climate change is often considered to be a problem of a distant future, meaning that it is seldom treated as an urgent challenge. Smog and air pollution have a permanent place in the public discourse. Therefore - despite the lack of recent media reports related to this area - this specific problem is deemed to be rather important. The above means that room exists for communication-related efforts that may underline the negative impact of food production on climate change.

Food waste is another area that is important for climate change, as it increases the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by the food sector. Each inhabitant of the Earth wastes or disposes of 74 kilograms of food, on average. Poland ranks fifth in the European Union in terms of food waste, wasting approximately 9 million tons per year. This phenomenon is combated, ever more frequently, by the private sector, local governments and higher education

institutions. Foodsharing schemes and food banks are established in our cities, and educational programs are introduced focusing on rational food management. Some grocery store chains offer "non-perfect" products, i.e. those nearing their best-before date or those with packaging defects, at promotional prices, attempting to encourage consumers to purchase this type of food and prevent it from being wasted. A shift may also be observed in consumer behaviors, as they declare willingness to reduce the amount of food wasted at home.

The growing global population poses a serious challenge when it comes to ensuring food security for every single human being. Feeding our society will require that the negative environmental impact of food production be mitigated and that sustainable food production methods be promoted. This has already been noticed by the private sector that starts to introduce this type of practices in its production processes. Transforming intensive farming into sustainable farming while maintaining sufficient productivity levels can only be achieved thanks to the cooperation of the business sector, the government and consumers throughout the entire value chain.

Regulatory changes are becoming visible as well. The new common agricultural policy (CAP) that will be launched in 2023 intends to transfer the European farming sector into a sustainable, resilient and modern operation. The policy will play a key role in supporting the European agricultural sector and will also support European farmers in their efforts to prevent climate change and protect the environment, in accordance with the European Commission's "farm-to-fork" concept and the 2030 biodiversity strategy.



Introduction to the report

The negative impact that mass-scale, unsustainable production of food exerts on the natural environment is plain to see with the naked eye. To operate successfully, the food industry requires large amounts of land. It depletes soil, consumes massive amounts of water and is a meaningful greenhouse gas emitter. According to research, nearly 40% of the surface of the Earth is used as arable land. Farming industry accounts for 69% of annual water use globally, and the food production sector is responsible for 22% of all greenhouse gas emissions. The majority of those emissions, i.e. nearly 60%, originate from animal breeding. In addition to carbon dioxide, animal breeding generates also methane and nitrous oxide - two greenhouse gases that pose a significant environmental threat.

The latest, 6th edition of the report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) proves that climate change is clearly attributable to human activity. If the climate policies currently in effect continue to be pursued, the average global temperature will increase, by the year 2100, by 3.2°C compared to the preindustrial era. In order to limit the increase in global temperature to 1.5°C and to preserve at least some of the endangered ecosystems, greenhouse gas emissions need to start dropping as early as in 2025, i.e. in three years' time. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the food sector uses approximately 30% of all energy globally, with a great majority of that energy being generated by burning fossil fuels. The processing of food, including such activities as cooling, washing, cooking, extracting, sieving, brewing, baking, pasteurizing or drying, is the most energy-intensive stage in food production.

The great and continuously evolving variety of mass-produced items available at store shelves proves that the demand for novelties is always on the rise in the food sector. It also serves as a testament to the lack of consumers' awareness about the quality of food, the amounts of food that are wasted and the impact that it exerts on the world around us. Excessive consumption and globalization have all contributed to the growth of the food industry which, willing to respond to consumer demand, continues to produce more and in an increasingly cost-efficient manner, failing to take account of the environmental and health-related costs associated with the process. The more food we produce, the more of it is wasted. According to FAO reports, 1.3 billion tons of edible food (1/3 of all food produced) are wasted each year worldwide. However, food production is not the only activity that generates greenhouse gas emissions. It is estimated that the carbon footprint of waste food amounts to 3.3 billion tons of CO₂ equivalent that are released into the atmosphere each year. Landfills at which waste food is stored are, in turn, one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the entire waste management sector.

People begin to notice that their diet and purchasing decisions leave a strong mark on the environment we live in. Practices such as veganism or less/zero waste living

help raise the awareness about the condition of our planet and about the impact that human activity exerts on its well-being. Plant-based alternatives of meat products are the right response to the question about the future of the meat industry. Vegan frankfurters, soybean-based cold meat equivalents or burgers made of beans are readily available in almost all grocery stores. In 2016, the first company selling plant-based burgers was listed on the stock exchange. The number of start-ups focusing on producing food in a manner that is less environmentally demanding than that pursued by the contemporary agricultural sector keeps growing each year. Vertical farms, laboratory-grown meat, animal proteins sourced from grubs are just the first steps, but much progress has already been made on the path to curtailing greenhouse gas emissions, mitigating the depletion of soil, limiting the use of water and reducing the amounts of land used to produce food.

The private food production sector and the retail industry should play a leading role in mitigating the environmental impact of food. By closely tracing the carbon and water footprints of the products they offer to consumers, those branches of the economy are capable of identifying the key challenges faced when producing foodstuffs. According to the latest CSR and ESG studies, it is the business sector that is responsible for the well-being of consumers and for the condition of the natural environment.

By introducing new and innovative solutions, it is capable of tracing and promoting the implementation of effective policies and technologies. Hence, understanding the manner in which the private sector operates and being aware of the impact it exerts on the quality of food and on the natural environment is of utmost importance.

The Earth will soon be inhabited by 10 billion people. With the standards currently in effect, this will require record-breaking quantities of food to be produced, with the negative outcomes of the process being clearly felt by our planet. What can we do to prevent those unfavorable developments? A simple and straightforward solution does not exist.

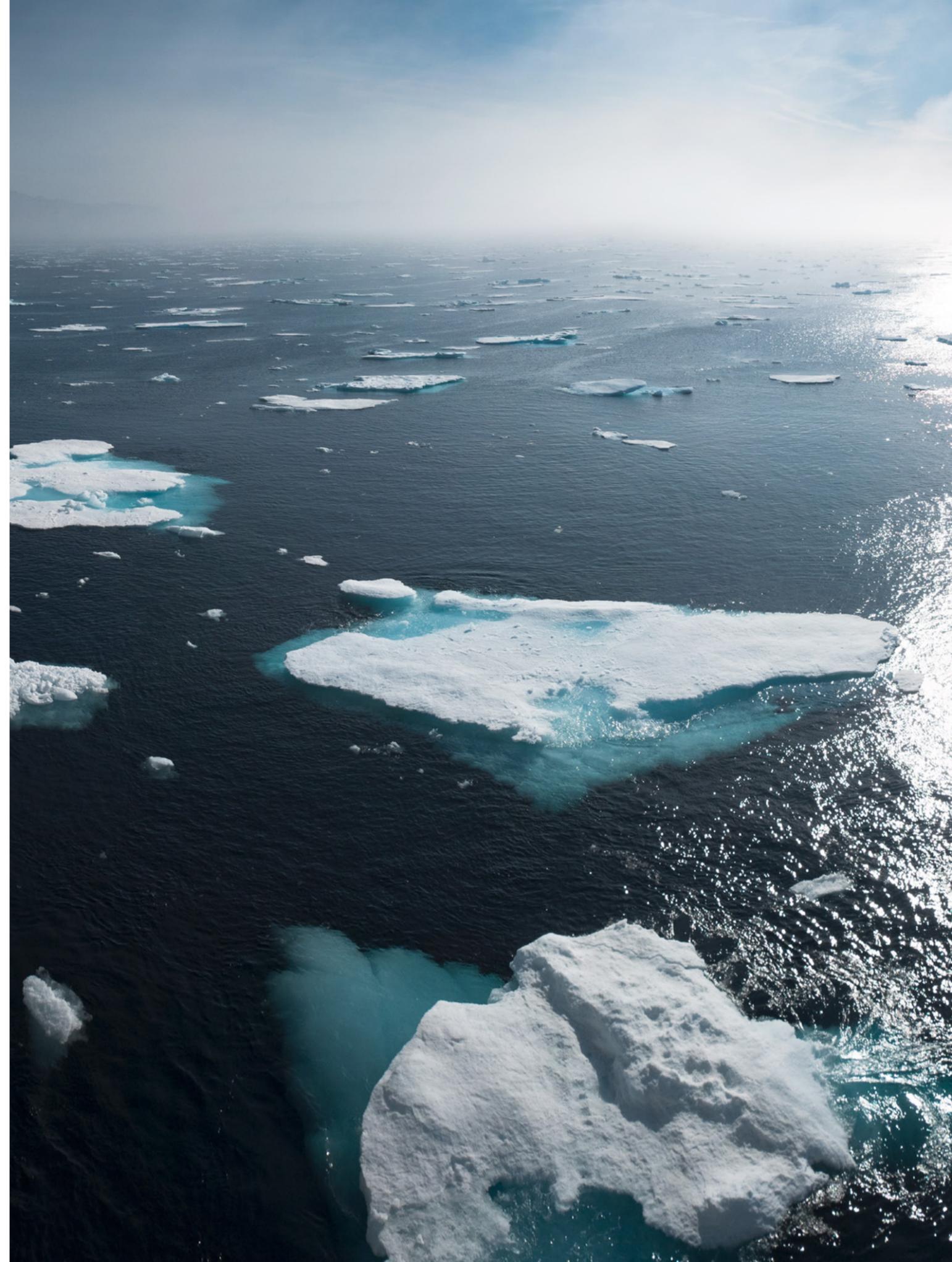
Educating the society, i.e. the consumers and the business sector, is one of the methods that may be relied upon. The more aware we are of the outcomes of our way of living, the more inclined the population will be to alter and modify its habits.

The report we have drawn up comprehensively describes the level of environmental awareness of the citizens of Poland and presents the impact that their nutrition-related habits exert on the environment.



Kamil Wyszowski

Representative and Executive Director
UN Global Compact Network Poland





Plant-based foods – for a healthy population and a healthy planet

Consciously opting for a plant-based diet not only improves our health, but also shows that we care for the environment.

Recent research confirms that the amount of people who decide to switch to a plant-based diet or at least significantly reduce the amount of meat and dairy products they consume continues to grow. Why is that? According to experts, such a diet guarantees lower intake of cholesterol and saturated fats. It has been proven that properly balanced plant-based diets are healthier. They also mitigate the risk of chronic diseases, with a particular emphasis placed on diabetes, obesity, as well as circulation system, degenerative and autoimmune illnesses and cancers.

Instead of meat and cheese....

The daily serving of 150g of meat or fish may be perfectly replaced by 2 eggs or 1.5 cups of boiled legumes (lentil, chickpeas, green peas, beans, soybeans). In order to boost the process of absorbing iron, they should be combined with fresh vegetables

(as a source of vitamin C). In a well-balanced diet, half of the vegetables we eat must be of the green leafed variety, as they are rich in calcium, proteins, iron, magnesium and chlorophyll. It is equally important to make sure that half of the vegetables be eaten raw, as thermal processing reduces the vitamin content. We should also bear in mind that according to recommendations of the World Health Organization, our daily intake of fruit and vegetables should amount to 400 grams minimum and should be divided into at least 5 portions.

What about fats?

Fats can be easily delivered to our systems by eating seeds (freshly ground linseed, chia, hemp, sesame, poppy and pumpkin seeds) and nuts (walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds), as these are a rich and natural source of fats. The content of unsaturated fatty acids in oils made of such nuts is much higher than in animal-based fats. Unfortunately, the amount of those fatty acids consumed by Poles is much lower than recommended. The process of producing plant-based items is much more favorable for the environment than the production of animal-based products. In light of the climate change we are dealing with, it is worth switch to plant-based alternatives in order to contribute, even to a small extent, to improving the condition of our planet.

Sebastian Tołwiński

Corporate Affairs & Communications Director, Central and Eastern Europe, Upfield

Introduction

Food production accounts for approximately 30% of global energy consumption, 70% of water consumption and, additionally, generates more than 20% of all greenhouse gas emissions. Animal-based foods that are produced in a multi-level chain of activities intended to breed animals for meat and dairy products have the largest share in this highly destructive blow to our planet. We are all wary of climate change, yet we continue to blame the industry, energy and transport sectors for everything that is bad. We fail to notice that all of us can do their little bit to improve the condition of our planet and the environment. Upfield has conducted its study titled "Climate Change vs. Food Production" to make sure that consumers and decision-makers finally notice the relationship between those two areas.

After the summer of 2022, when Central Europe experienced dry river beds and peat bogs, when lake coasts receded by a few meters, when death-waging tornadoes touched down in areas in which moderate climate prevailed not that long ago, when unbearable heat waves started to kill the elderly - we can no longer continue falsely claiming that climate change is just a phenomenon invented by industry-sponsored scientists to frighten the citizens, or that it helps radical environmentalists to prevent the continued development of the world we live in. We can all see and feel the adverse changes. And saying that we have to do something about it for the sake of our children is

outright cliché. We have to do something - today - primarily for the sake of ourselves. And we must not wait for state governments and international organizations to lead by example. All of us can reduce our negative impact on the climate on an everyday basis.

Consumers commonly fail to link the problem of climate change with the choices they make when shopping for food. This is highly regrettable, as by choosing plant-based products instead of meat and dairy, we can easily contribute to boosting the wellbeing of our planet. The manner in which individuals care for the environment is usually limited to segregating waste and reducing water consumption - activities that are either forced by legal regulations or encouraged by economic factors. We are not doing much on our own initiative, as we expect the climate-related problems to be solved, on our behalf, by someone else. This is a cognitive mistake, since if all of us do slightly more than is required of us, the outcome of such a collective effort will by far exceed that of many government-led initiatives.

That is why it is of such great importance to make sure that our diets become increasingly biased towards plant-based products. We should be opting, ever more frequently, for plant-based equivalents of animal products. This will be highly advantageous not only for the planet and for the environment we live in, but will also be beneficial for our health.





1. Climate change-related concerns

The number of people fearing climate change - a phenomenon we are experiencing right now - is growing. Prolonged droughts, rising temperatures, unexpected flooding or violent weather bring about a number of adverse health-related, economic, environmental and political outcomes. The consequences that climate change has for the physical and mental health of humans, as well as for the level of our fear and stress, are one of the most underestimated areas. In a series of its reports (e.g. APA, 2017), the American Psychological Association stresses that some indirect mental consequences of contemporary climate change may be distinguished. Indirect consequences are deemed to include those that affect conscious observers - people who are not direct victims of events triggered by climate change, such as floods, fires, heat waves, forced migration or loss of livelihood. Such conscious observers are "merely" becoming aware of the scale of the problem and anticipate its future consequences. The term "climate depression" has been coined for a reason. The syndrome affects a growing number of people each year.

Based on the research we may conclude that the majority of the surveyed are worried about climate change. Climate change is feared, to some extent, by 86% of survey participants. It is worth stressing that 56% of them stated that the level of their fear is significant and very significant. The answers provided differ depending on sex and age of the respondents. Women tend to be more worried about climate change than men. The youngest group of the survey participants stands out as well, as they more frequently declare insignificant concerns about climate change. The greatest concerns, in turn, have been observed among those in their fifties.



2. Environmental knowledge and awareness

During the first edition of the “Earthlings on the Attack” project that was held in 2019, Poles were asked if they were aware of the problems concerning the natural environment. As many as 72% of the respondents agreed, back then, that “the Earth’s condition was serious and required immediate action”.

The survey was conducted again one year later. Interestingly, in 2022 (after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic) the same question has generated an even higher share of positive answers (78%). It turns out that the pandemic has not rendered Poles blind to the fundamental problem we face as a civilization. A great majority of respondents are correct in noting that “humans and their activities pose a threat to the natural environment”. In light of the war in Ukraine and the food crisis it has exacerbated, the level of environmental awareness will be growing on a systematic basis.

Environmental awareness is considered to be tantamount to assuming responsibility for the condition of the natural environment. According to surveys conducted to the order of the Ministry of Environment and Climate, environmental awareness of Poles is growing. However, more than half of the surveyed have identified environmental protection as an area that is most problematic for our country.

According to a survey by IBRIS, the respondents have good awareness of climate change. 44% of them consider the level of their environmental awareness to be good. Although the majority of respondents declare to be interested in information concerning climate change, 35% of them follow the latest in this regard only superficially. Furthermore, one in two of the surveyed admits that their environmental awareness is mediocre, and one in twenty that it is low.



3. Sources of climate change-related knowledge

“Education is a prerequisite for responding to climate change on a global scale” - reads the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted in 1992. However, 45% of textbooks complying with the school curricula in effect in 100 countries worldwide, analyzed by UNESCO, failed to contain any references to environmental issues and to progressing climate change. Nature is suffering irreparable damage all over the world, but the issue of biodiversity is omitted in 81% of school textbooks. Even if they touch on questions concerning the environment, they deal with them in a highly superficial manner.

Climate education in Polish schools definitely needs some revamping. Thinking about the well-being of the young generation that will have to face climate-related challenges in their lifetime, we need to equip the society with adequate adaptation tools. We also have to arm it with knowledge and provide it with relevant skills. Although a number of events are organized by various communities to increase the climate change-related awareness in Poles, the school curricula need to be modified as well to enable the introduction of common, interdisciplinary and comprehensive climate education.

Knowledge about climate-related processes and the condition of the planet is sourced by respondents primarily from television and the Internet, although only one in five of the surveyed considers those sources of information to be trustworthy and reliable. According to the respondents, scientific publications are the most reliable source of information about climate change, but they are relied upon only by 20% of the surveyed. Films and documentaries showing natural life are rather popular sources of knowledge as well, and they are relatively often considered to be reliable.



4. Attitudes towards climate change and protection of the environment

The majority of adult Poles approach global warming in a very serious manner and consider it to be a problem. Less than 10% of Poles deny climate change.

The surveyed are aware - or at least they declare so - that the climate of the Earth is changing. Furthermore, they mainly blame human activity for the processes that are taking place currently. They seem to be aware that their daily decisions and activities impact the condition of the planet and try to act taking that knowledge into consideration. Nearly 7 in 10 respondents would like to find out more on how to prevent climate change on their own.



5. Awareness of factors causing climate change

IPCC reports clearly indicate that climate change results from over one hundred years of unsustainable use of energy and land, as well as from unfavorable lifestyles and specific consumption and production models.

According to the surveys, 55% of the respondents are of the opinion that climate change is caused primarily by human activity. They perceive wide-scale operations, such as deforestation, generation of energy or waste management, as the key areas giving rise to environmental challenges. Every other respondent does not understand, however, the notion of “carbon footprint”.



6. Dietary preferences in the context of climate change

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), intensive livestock production “is one of the significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global.”

26% of the respondents (with 22% being flexitarians) have opted to reduce or completely eliminate their meat or dairy consumption. Almost 5% of the surveyed are vegetarians or vegans. They have been encouraged to switch to a diet that is rich in plant-based products by health-related considerations (77%), but also by the care for the environment (51%) or for the well-being of animals (40%).



7. Covid-19 pandemic vs. Pro-environmental activities

The Covid-19 pandemic has turned the lives of most of us upside down. Lockdowns, forced isolation and remote work have impacted a number of different areas of our everyday lives. We experienced significant change in our social, private and professional lives.

75% of the surveyed claim that the pandemic has not changed the intensity of their pro-environmental efforts. Less than 20% of the respondents declare that they are currently doing more for the environment.



8. Purchasing decisions

It is not possible to list all factors that influence the consumers' purchasing decisions. All customers are driven by their own, subjective preferences. Marketing experts decided to categorize the most popular factors impacting purchasing decisions and have divided them into 4 major groups: situational, personal, psychological and social factors.

According to the surveyed, the key factors impacting their choices of food products include the following: ingredients, place of manufacture (Polish/foreign products) and price. Only 9% of the surveyed take into account the impact that manufacturing processes exert on the environment while making their purchasing decisions. Almost one in three respondents declare, in turn, that climate and environment-related aspects do influence their purchasing decisions. In the case of 22% of the surveyed, factors related to climate change and the condition of the planet impact their purchasing decisions only to a limited extent. Those who are concerned about climate change significantly more frequently declare that this particular aspect materially impacts their product choices.

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