Conclusion

The negative health and environmental impacts of meat consumption are far-reaching as presented in the chapters of this book. Simple solutions through changing human diet are within our reach. There are a lot of alternatives to animal proteins which offer exciting opportunities. It is time to participate, by reducing meat consumption, in creating better prospects for the human race and all other species on this planet.

As we were finishing this book the G7 summit in Bonn produced a commitment to phase out fossil fuels by the end of this century in order to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Despite their large global warming impact and huge opportunities for reduction in dangerous anthropogenic emissions, changes in meat production and consumption were again not on the agenda of this and, in fact, most previous climate change international meetings. However, the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2014) in its assessment reports for the first time highlights that different policy directions are needed when looking at a 20- or 100-year time horizon. Over twenty years, from all sectors of the economy, the largest contributor to global warming potential is agriculture – 22% compared to 20% for industry, 17% for electricity and heat production, 9.8% for transport and 5.7 for buildings. A major reason behind agriculture’s high contribution is the livestock sector and the methane emissions associated with enteric fermentation and manure management. Methane is 84 times more powerful than CO$_2$ (IPCC, 2014). Nitrous oxide – another greenhouse gas linked to farming and agriculture is 264 times more powerful than CO$_2$ (IPCC, 2014). It is obvious that the climate change imperatives are much broader than the currently emphasized alternative fuels and renewable energy. If we are to avert global warming’s worst case scenarios meat reduction is an imperative.

Commitments for 2100 are close to the hundred-year scale and, although essential for changing the technological trajectories and use of natural resources, we need a much quicker response to stabilize climate change at a 2°C temperature increase. Being less than one generation long, the twenty-year horizon is a timeframe most people are comfortable with. They can relate to events in the past and can plan for the future on this scale. It is within this timeframe that meat reduction can have an immediate impact.

Were we to drastically cut the consumption of animal proteins now, the emitted methane will remain in the earth’s atmosphere for 20 years before gradually vanishing. By limiting further addition of food animal-related methane and nitrous oxide we can free up the air from these powerful gases to pave the road for a better future and allow the atmospheric space for renewable energy and other new climate friendly technologies to phase in.

By drastically reducing meat consumption, we will also achieve better personal and public health goals including reductions in obesity rates, cancers, cardiovascular diseases, saving antibiotics and diminishing
Conclusion

pressures on land, forests, water and food security. There will be more opportunities to reduce global poverty. We will not have to condemn billions of food animals to short lives of exploitation. There will be new business opportunities around plant-based proteins…

The scientific evidence about meat consumption is clear. We hope we managed to communicate this to you. Eating less meat is the best option we have to safeguard human and environmental health.

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**REFERENCE**