

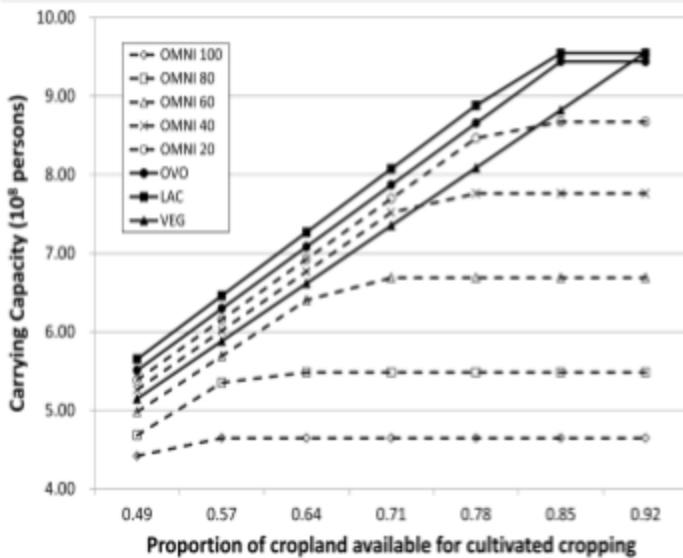
# Getting the facts Straight about the Vegan Diet

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In a modern world where humans are depleting natural resources faster than they can renew them, it is time to make a change. Popular foods in the American diet (red meat, dairy products, and processed/artificially sweetened foods) are some of the most damaging to the environment due to the high amounts of fossil fuels and nonrenewable resources that go into their production. The vegan diet, when compared to both vegetarian and omnivorous diets, has a lower greenhouse gas emission total, a lesser effect on the ozone layer, and has a much smaller use of fossil fuels than omnivorous or vegetarian diet. (Baroni et al. 2006) But is it ultimately the most sustainable? Modern research suggests that it isn't.



**Sensitivity of carrying capacity to starting assumptions regarding the proportion of cropland available for cultivation.**



Solid lines indicate vegetarian diet scenarios and dashed lines indicate omnivore diet scenarios. Diets are described in detail in text and Table 1 (Peters et al. 2016).

If veganism became the mainstream American diet, what would happen to the non-arable grazing fields currently used for livestock? Larger amounts of earth's land is more suited, and is currently being used for, grazing/livestock production rather than for plant based agriculture. With veganism being a diet whose centric principle is the avoidance of the consumption of animal products we encounter a problem. Having too specific a diet would actually prove to be a detriment due to the vast quantities of unused land. As a result, the carrying capacity for a vegan diet is not as high as the other vegetarian diets who incorporate animal products. This is evident when looking at the figure to the left entitled "Sensitivity of carrying capacity to starting assumptions regarding the proportion of cropland available for cultivation." (Peters C.J et. al. 2016) Thus to make the most out of the land we have available, and to feed all of the world's peoples, slight pastoral agriculture should be incorporated. An entirely plant based diet for all the world's people would not be sustainable for a growing population expected to be higher than nine million by 2050 (US Census Bureau July, 2015). With a vegan diet, the carrying capacity of humans on Earth could be precariously lowered. And although it may not be the "most" sustainable diet, switching to a diet free of animal products is among the most sustainable ways to eat, as it can eliminate some of the emissions that stem from the production of livestock.

## Works Cited

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