

U.N. says climate change is affecting the cost and availability of food

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Rows of soybean plants in a field near Bennington, Nebraska. A report by the United Nations released on Thursday, August 8, 2019, says that human-caused climate change is dramatically degrading the planet's land, while the way people use the Earth is making global warming worse. Photo by: Nati Harnik/AP Photo

GENEVA, Switzerland — Climate change is badly hurting the Earth's land. Humans are hurting the land, too. A new United Nations (U.N.) report provides proof of this.

The report says the land is already in bad shape. That's because of global warming. It also says people's use of the land is causing more problems.

The problems are making it harder to get food. Food costs are going up. Food has also become lower in healthy nutrients.

The problem is becoming worse fast, said NASA climate scientist Cynthia Rosenzweig. NASA is the U.S. space agency. Rosenzweig was a co-author of the U.N. report. The report was released on August 8.

Rosenzweig said climate change could reduce people's food on the dinner table.

Land Is Warming Twice As Fast As The Planet

People could delay this though. They must change what they eat. They can also change how they farm and manage forests. With changes, scientists say the Earth might not get as warm.

Earth's land is only 30 percent of the globe. Yet the land is warming twice as fast as the planet as a whole. Carbon dioxide is a heat-trapping gas. It is created by burning fossil fuels. Oil and gas are fossil fuels. Too much carbon dioxide in the air causes pollution. The land is harmed, too. This has not been talked about much.

The U.N. special report was created by more than 100 scientists. It was presented at an August 8 meeting. The scientists met in Geneva, Switzerland. The report warned of serious problems. It also offered ideas to solve problems.

"The way we use land is both part of the problem and also part of the solution," said Valerie Masson-Delmotte. She's a French climate scientist.

The report said one problem is destructive weather events. Flooding is one example. Drought is another example. Drought is a long period of low rainfall. It results in a water shortage. Weather problems can harm animals and crops. There's less food made.

People Should Change What They Eat

NASA's Rosenzweig said there's a danger to many crops. She said the number of crops in Europe fell in the last two weeks.

Better farming practices can also be used to fight climate change, the report said. Farming changes could lower carbon dioxide pollution, for example.

People can also change what they eat. People should eat less red meat. They should eat more fruits and vegetables. This could help lower carbon dioxide as well.

Reducing food waste can fight climate change, too. The report looked at food waste between 2010 and 2016. The waste resulted in 8 to 10 percent of the world's heat-trapping emissions.

Quiz

- 1 The MAIN idea of the article is that climate change is causing food problems.
Which key detail from the article supports the article's MAIN idea?
- (A) Carbon dioxide is a heat-trapping gas. It is created by burning fossil fuels. Oil and gas are fossil fuels.
 - (B) Flooding is one example. Drought is another example. Drought is a long period of low rainfall.
 - (C) NASA's Rosenzweig said there's a danger to many crops. She said the number of crops in Europe fell in the last two weeks.
 - (D) People can also change what they eat. People should eat less red meat. They should eat more fruits and vegetables.
- 2 What is the MAIN idea of the section "People Should Change What They Eat"?
- (A) There are actions people can take to fight climate change.
 - (B) Food is starting to cost more and have less nutrients.
 - (C) People could have less food on the table soon.
 - (D) Climate change is causing changes in the weather.
- 3 How do floods and droughts affect the food we eat?
- (A) Floods can stop droughts from hurting the plants and animals we eat.
 - (B) Floods and droughts can harm the plants and animals we eat.
 - (C) Droughts can stop floods from hurting the plants and animals we eat.
 - (D) Floods and droughts can be good for the plants and animals we eat.
- 4 Why does the report say people should eat less red meat?
- (A) to speed up climate change
 - (B) to lower carbon dioxide amounts
 - (C) to create heat-trapping emissions
 - (D) to stop people from wasting food

Answer Key

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