

# Making a difference one green meal at a time

 By Cari Van Wyk

8 Dec 2015

We live in an unsustainable world and it has become a problem of such magnitude that I wonder if you would believe that simply changing your diet could help? According to an article by Mike Berners-Lee, founding director of Small World Consulting, on [The Conversation](#) "[going vegetarian might cut the greenhouse gas footprint by 25%.](#)" Knowing this, we have to seriously consider where our meat comes from, how it is produced and what we can do to change our own individual footprints.



Tozie Zokufa

In October 2015, the Humane Society International (HSI), announced the launch of Green Monday in South Africa which is an initiative with the aim to improve animal welfare, human health and environmental sustainability by raising public awareness and educating consumers about the realities of animal agriculture. We spoke to Tozie Zokufa, Humane Society International programme manager, about saving the world one meal at a time.

## ■ **What exactly is Green Monday and how will it help improve animal welfare, human health and environmental sustainability?**

**Tozie Zokufa:** Green Monday is an easy, flexible and fun way to make a positive difference. Eat and serve plant-based meals (no eggs, no meat and no dairy) on Mondays to help animals, improve health, and lessen impact on the environment. Other green activities are also encouraged, such as cutting down on food waste.

It's about making a difference now, one green meal at a time, so that we foster a great life for future generations who will be impacted by the consumption choices we make today.

The animal agriculture sector is a key contributor to climate change, water pollution and water use. Cutting down on meat, egg, and dairy consumption can mitigate our environmental impact, whilst safeguarding our health. Studies have found that those who eat plant-based diets tend to have a lower risk of obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer. Nutrition experts around the world advocate eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to improve overall health and prevent disease.

**▣ What is Green Monday doing to get local governments, businesses and consumers on board with the initiative and how can they successfully participate?**

**Zokufa:** We are appealing to government, local, national and international companies and approaching them one by one to join this great initiative. Participation is very easy, that is, you (or the company) replaces animal protein on their plates with plant based foods every Monday, so their cafeterias, canteens, etc. would serve plant-based foods on Mondays.

**▣ What are the most important environmental problems that the initiative is addressing?**

**Zokufa:** The environment as a whole is impacted negatively by animal agriculture, but, closer to home it will be water usage and/or wastage. By adopting Green Monday this coming festive season, South Africans can assist in alleviating the pressure on water and minimize the impact caused by drought. Other problems that can be minimized by adopting Green Monday are soil degradation, greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution and deforestation.

**▣ Why is the growing animal agriculture sector a serious problem?**

**Zokufa:** We cannot do more of the same. Land and water are now much more stressed than in the past decades. There is an increase in population growth and migration to urban areas. It is estimated that by 2023, 33% of the world's population will live in areas of absolute water scarcity, including South Africa. Worldwide, we feed more than 50% of grain to livestock, but, we have almost 1 billion people going to bed hungry every night. A third of the planet is desertified with animal agriculture being a leading driver.

**▣ What effects will the growing industrialisation of the food and farming sector have on society and the environment and what can be done to steer this movement into a more sustainable one?**

**Zokufa:** It is already causing mass extinction and is responsible for between 80-90% of water consumption. Studies have found that eating meat tends to have a negative impact on human health, with higher risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer. Factory farms tend to hire less personnel because they are mostly automated, increasing the rates of unemployment. People can make a difference by eating green and taking a pledge on [Green Monday](#).

Secondly, one can educate him/herself about where their food comes from and support emerging farmers who are practicing animal welfare friendly and sustainable agriculture.

**▣ What are the main benefits of following a plant-based diet?**

**Zokufa:** • Plant-based foods are delicious and easy to prepare.

• It can be more cost effective than meat-centric meals.

• You could improve the health and future of the earth one meal at a time. By switching to plant-based foods on Green Monday you'll actually be reducing your carbon footprint! That's because plant-based foods tend to use less water, require

less land for production, and emit fewer greenhouse gases than the production of animal products.

- Plant-based diets are healthy.

## ABOUT CARI VAN WYK

Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.

- #AfricaMonth: Committing to the digital transformation of agriculture in Africa - 17 May 2018
- How to put the youth back in agriculture - 26 Feb 2018
- Is sustainable agricultural production, food security possible? - 6 Dec 2017
- #AgriIndaba: Modernised, scalable agri-education is key in training and feeding the masses - 30 Nov 2017
- #EntrepreneurMonth: A different perspective on sugar from the sugarcane fields of Mauritius - 2 Nov 2017

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>