

Theme 1
 “From planet to plate”
 interview with **Dave Reay**



TAKE A BITE OUT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

#TakeABiteAtHome

AT HOME



INTRODUCING...

I'm Dave, and I work on understanding how governments and people can reduce climate change by changing how we make things and food, and by making better choices at home.

INTERVIEW

Isn't most of climate change being caused by the big companies, for example the ones that dig up oil and gas, instead of by individual people like me and you?

About 40% of all UK emissions come from households, so a big chunk of the greenhouse gas emissions in this country actually comes from decisions individual people make at home, like how we heat houses, what we eat, and how much 'stuff' we buy. For example, if we use more energy at home or take lots of flights then this means those big companies have to dig up more oil or burn more gas. Likewise for our food – if we buy a lot of food that then gets wasted this means farmers have to grow even more food and so even more greenhouse gases get emitted. The average household in the UK is responsible for around 8 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year, with the biggest culprits being home heating & electricity, travelling in cars and planes, and producing all the food we buy.

How might climate change affect me?

Everywhere will get warmer. Here in the UK, our winters are set to become wetter and warmer and our summers drier and hotter. When the rain does come it's likely to more often come as really heavy downpours that overwhelm drains and cause flooding. In the summers we are at more and more risk of very hot days and heat waves that pose a serious risk to our health.

I like sunny days, so isn't climate change a good thing?

I like the sun too! But along with more sunny summer days we'll have to deal with it being a lot hotter and drier. The plants we eat need water to grow, and when there isn't any rain then it's really bad news for them. This means less food for us, and less food for the animals we eat. A hotter, drier future also means more risk of wildfires and on some summer days, even here in the UK, climate change may make it simply too hot to go outside.

How might some of my favourite foods be affected by climate change?

If you like chocolate (who doesn't?!) then climate change is a big worry. Most of our chocolate comes from cocoa trees in West Africa and many growers there are now seeing hotter, drier conditions damaging their cocoa crops and pushing their farms out of business. If you like chips then it's bad news again I'm afraid. Potatoes need plenty of water and as our summers get drier so the potato plants suffer. If the dry periods last for a long time (a drought) then we'll see harvests dwindle if we do nothing to protect them. During a big drought in the UK in 2018 the potato crop was hit badly and there was even a fear that our chips would all have to be an inch shorter!

SO, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

There's lots you can do to help at home! Walk and cycle wherever safe and possible, and use the car less. Even if you live a long way from school maybe you could walk the last part of the journey, and get fit at the same time! Have your holidays in this country instead of taking an aeroplane abroad. If you need to buy something, try to get it second hand instead of buying new. In winter, wear warmer clothes and turn the heating down at home. Eat more vegetables, beans and nuts, and less of foods that come from animals, and definitely try not to throw away food – at the moment almost one-third of all the world's food is wasted. Finally, and really importantly, tell the people running the country that you think this is an important problem – we can all do our bit but they also need to help us to do more.

PROFILE

Prof. Dave Reay @keelingcurve is Executive Director of the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation at the University of Edinburgh, an advisor on climate change for the Scottish Government, and is author of “Your Planet Needs You! A Kid's Guide to Going Green” and most recently the free online book “Climate-Smart Food”.

