

Our food system and climate change are strongly linked to each other

(by Livia Mühlegger, 6CG)

The first questions to pop up in your head are for sure: What is a food system? And how can food and climate change be so strongly linked to each other?

To answer your questions, a food system includes all the stages of keeping people fed: growing, harvesting, packaging, processing, transporting, marketing, consuming and disposing of food. And it's all about how we look after our planet while taking all these steps. For example, if we transport the food a long way to where it is finally sold, if we unnecessarily waste and throw away food and if we use pesticides for growing plants, all of these issues make a huge difference. Why? -because food systems affect climate change. As we dispose of groceries and burn them, CO₂ is released into the atmosphere. When that isn't the case, the abandoned goods land in the ocean, the woods or on the streets. To grow many plants and produce what we eat daily rainforests and former forests are cut down and no longer able to change CO₂ into oxygen, which also contributes to the greenhouse effect. The final part of this process is carriage. When goods are shipped a long way around the world, be it by airplane, boat or car, there is a huge release of carbon dioxide.

Not just that, what makes it even more clear that these two topics are strongly linked is the fact that the temperature increase in return has an influence on our food system. Climate change increases and changes, level, temperature and surroundings of the ocean where we also grow and harvest our food. Fish and other animals living in the sea that we eat are threatened or have to be produced differently so we can eat them. Plants growing on farmland depend on the climate. What ailments, how much, and how do we grow it? All that depends on the climate. In addition, storing, transporting and all the other stages of producing eatable goods are affected by the climate. So, if the climate becomes different, our supplies will too.

For the earth's population this means reacting to the way climate differs and will be changing our food system. One answer is adaptation. We have started to identify ways to reduce the impact of increasing temperature on human and natural systems. Another response is mitigation. We need to intensify the adopting of strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance ways to absorb greenhouse gases, like preserving forests and restoring rangeland.

Climate change is not a problem which will fade by time, so it's all the more important that everyone contributes when it comes to initiating new steps against issues at hand, because the food system is not the only matter threatened by earth warming. Climate change affects our whole life, the planet of all of us people living on earth.