

Youth Activists and Sustainable Food Systems in a Globalizing World

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Animal husbandry, from feeding to selective breeding, has been noted as consuming large quantities of water and it is responsible for 18% of greenhouse gas emissions (cf. Scholtz et al. 2013). The increasing demand for animal products, particularly for red meat, intensifies consequently the high emissions of greenhouse gases. Despite this, because of the growing urbanization and increasing per-capita incomes, the consumption of processed meat has surged across the globe, with processed meat being consumed as part of the main dish or as a dessert. Still, despite climate change being a universal issue, certain social groups are bound to suffer from the impact of climate change more than others. By 2050, youths will be living with approximately 11 billion others on a planet with sea levels higher than 5.32 cm with temperatures oscillating between 0.8°C to 2.6°C warmer and atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ wavering from 463 to 623 ppm (in contrast to the present 400 ppm atmospheric concentrations of fossil fuel CO₂ emissions) (cf. Nkrumah 2020). This projection implies that young people will bear the brunt of climate change as this transition will permeate and redefine their political, social, and economic enterprises. Consequently, there have been a growing number of young climate activists (YCA) advocating for sustainable environmental practices (cf. Nkrumah 2021). At the forefront of this advocacy are Germany's Luisa-Marie Neubauer, Sweden's Greta Thunberg, and South Africa's Yola Mgogwana. Although they spring from different geographical enclaves, common strategies that run through their advocacies include mobilizing around climate change. Sadly, while these YCA continue to demand greater accountability from governments, they rarely advocate for a shift in eating behavior towards plant-based diets. It is against this backdrop that the proposal seeks to understand the lack of activism around urban meat consumption and how young activist could be empowered to influence social structures, which influences meat consumption in cities.

References

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