



Press Release
48th Cairo Climate Talks

June 20th, 2017

**“Cowspiracy Movie Screening & Discussion”
Can changing our diet help combat climate change?**

Follow our [Facebook page](#) to stay updated on events and climate change news

It is an undeniable fact that to preserve human life on earth, the human race needs to gravely cut emissions, from as many sources as possible. The Food and Agriculture Organization states that 14.5% of all greenhouse gas emissions causing climate change as well as 25% of water consumption globally are caused by the meat and dairy production, calling for an urgent need to reconsider food sources.

“For this special CCT taking place in Ramadan, a time when people share a lot of meals with their loved ones, we extend an invitation to a state of mindfulness and awareness of food sources” Rauia Toama, Head of the Science Department at the German Embassy in Cairo, opened the event with those words, setting the scene for the movie that followed; *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret*. The movie follows the journey of an environmentalist who discovers that his efforts in being an environmentally conscious individual are all ineffective as long as his diet includes meat and dairy. He then goes on a journey to investigate the industry and the environmental organizations that seem to be withholding this information from the public.

Dr. Hassan Abou Bakr, Professor of Biological Control in Cairo University, exclaimed at the comparison between mass agriculture and the fossil fuel industry commenting “for every calorie of food, we consume 5 calories of energy. The two issues can not and should not be separated from each other.” He added that a holistic solution needs a holistic view of the issue at hand; separating the issue of meat and dairy consumption from other issues including fossil fuels, water and externalities is bound to lead to a short-sited result.

Addressing the issue of individually-lead action, Dr. Hala Barakat, Food Rights Expert, pointed out that individual decisions and choices are the way forward. “The movie follows a journey of awareness. The move maker decides there is no point in addressing the industry, but rather the consumers, which is more effective in the current context.”

While the movie brought forth an American perspective, Dr. Mohamed Osman, Livestock Director at Dina Farms in Egypt, channeled the industry locally. “Dina Farms, along with

many other agricultural enterprises are on reclaimed desert land, which makes them more sustainable and eco-friendly. And while mass farming is a huge threat, only 10% of all agricultural activities in Egypt are considered to be mass-farming, the remaining 90% is regular farming, which does not pose a threat to the environment” he explained. “There is a food gap, the only solution to this food gap is to produce more animals, it is unrealistic to assume or promote for completely eliminating the meat and dairy industry, however, it is necessary to take into consideration the different technologies and systems that have proven effective in making the industry more sustainable” he added. One of the ways the industry could be made more sustainable is using manure in energy production, creating a closed system in which both waste and emissions are kept to a minimum.

Although agreeing that agricultural practices can be made more sustainable, Dr. Hassan argued that there is no food gap, explaining that the root cause of the apparent food gap is unjust distribution of food resources, rather than the lack of them. “The system in which the food is being manufactured, distributed and consumed is a part of a bigger economic system which favors people based on class, as long as this system exists, this so-called food gap will exist” he expanded on the issue of the bigger picture and the importance of holistic solutions.

“Egyptians have long been vegetarians. Meat consumption was limited to once a week or on special occasions, which makes for a healthier and a more sustainable diet.” Dr. Hala commented. She also pointed out the importance of the availability of nutritious food rather than food in its utmost sense, while a meat intensive diet might not be the healthiest or the most sustainable, a vegetarian diet could very well be as unhealthy and unsustainable if it is an unbalanced diet which depends heavily on imported mass produced transported to Egypt, heavily increasing their effect on the environment. She also added that growing one’s food drastically changes one’s carbon footprint as well as their diet and perspective of food. “You create a new sense of appreciation for the food you grow and consume along with the process of food production, and it’s a life change experience” she explained.

The experts did not agree on a perfect diet; however they all agreed that a local diet is a cornerstone in the solution. Dr. Osman added that 80% of all resources in the industry are imported; producing those resources locally would drastically change the shape of the industry. Innovation in the field of the meat and dairy industry is bound to make the industry more sustainable and productive, to the end that food is abundant as well as sustainable. Dr. Hala stressed on the importance of locally produced food and questioning food sources and their nutritious value.

Background Information:

The Cairo Climate Talks are conceived, organized and hosted as a cooperation between the German Embassy in Cairo, the Egyptian Ministry of Environment, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). For more information, please visit our website or contact info@cairoclimatetalks.net.