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EAT Lancet report; LMC says red meat is part of the solution

Commenting on the latest report issued by the EAT Lancet Commission, Ian Stevenson, Chief Executive of the Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) said: “The report tells us much of what we already know and can agree on; food must be produced sustainably across the globe to ensure that a growing population can be fed.

“Where our viewpoint differs is the suggestion that global red meat consumption needs to reduce by 50 per cent to approximately 14g a day. Red meat plays an important role in a healthy balanced diet and reducing intakes to this level may have significant unintended consequences on the health of the population and the natural landscape.

“Red meat produced in the UK is a sustainable source of protein. It makes best use of natural resources and requires very few additional inputs. Naturally occurring rain contributes to grass growth which cattle and sheep consume and convert into high quality protein that is ideal for human consumption. It is a natural cycle which has been running for thousands of years in tune with, and complementary to, our environment.

“Additionally, grazing cattle and sheep manage pastures very effectively to help remove carbon present in the atmosphere and makes sustainable use of massive swathes of agricultural land that cannot be used for growing other types of food.

“Furthermore, red meat is an important source of nutrients which are essential for the human body’s growth and development when incorporated as part of a healthy, balanced diet. Red meat is rich in iron, zinc, B-vitamins and protein, to name a few, and the UK government recommends consuming 70g per day. Any cut in red meat intake may have an unintended detrimental impact on health.

“For example, according to the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) iron intake among Northern Irish females, especially those under the age of 18, is as little as 50 per cent of the lower recommended nutrient intake. An increase in red meat intake for this group would help alleviate this particular deficiency.

“The red meat sector is a professional industry with a strong focus on all facets of social, economic and environmental sustainability. Red meat is not part of the problem for the future, it is part of the solution.”

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