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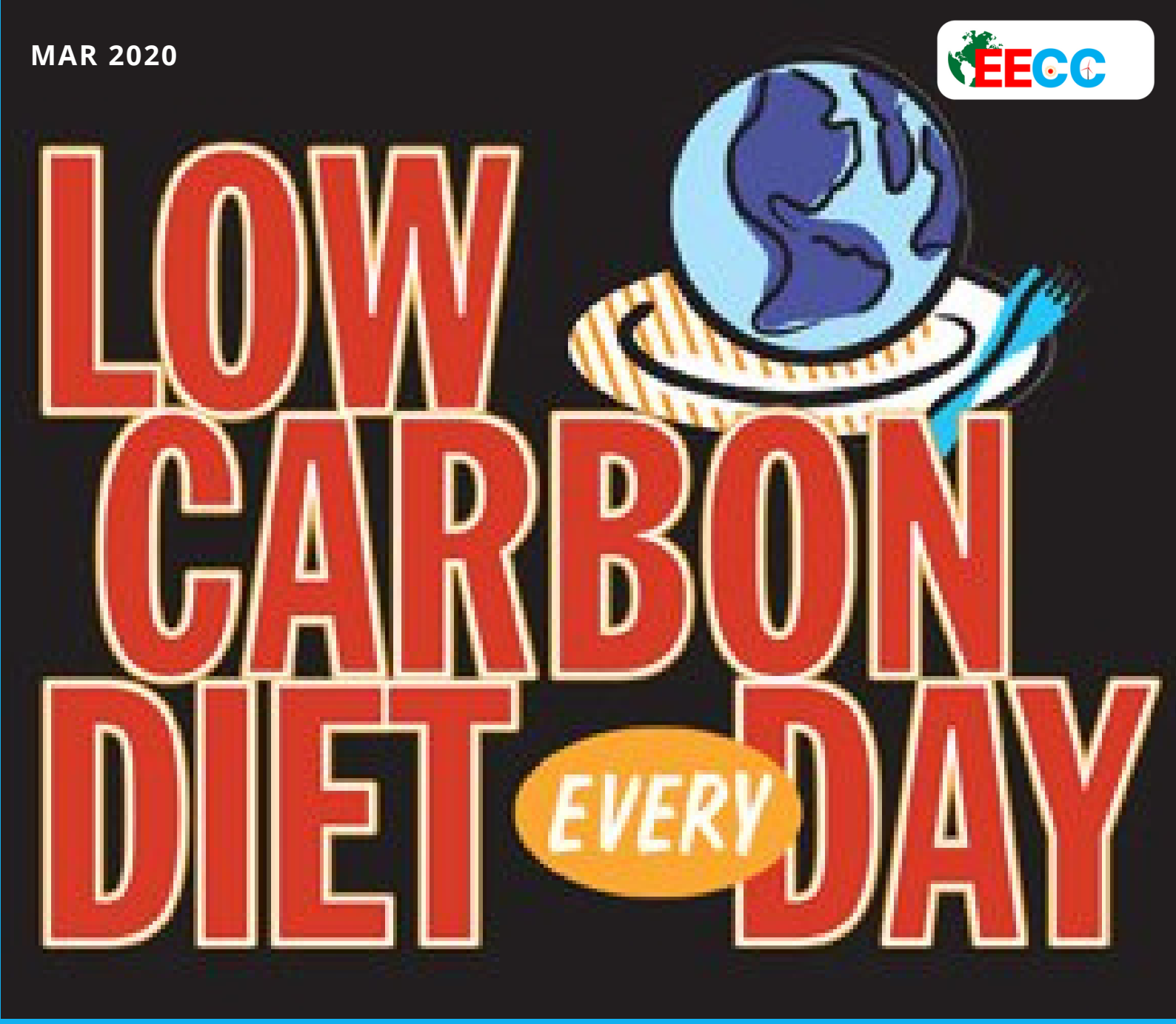

LOW CARBON DIET TO REDUCE GLOBAL CARBON FOOTPRINT

CASE STUDY/INSIGHT

E2020-03-05

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Saving our planet from the dangers of global warming and climate change can start even from our food habits. This is true because the agriculture and food production is identified as the source for around 30% of global GHG emissions. Though as the end consumers, we cannot reduce all the GHG emissions from food production, it is possible to significantly contribute to GHG emission reduction by changing the food habits and taking low carbon diet.

Production and consumption of food involves a big supply chain of activities from land use change, farming, use of fertilizers, supply of water, harvesting using machines, processing and packaging at the industries, transport/export to different consumer locations, end user consumption & disposal of food waste. A low carbon diet is one with comparatively lower GHG emissions in any or all of these different stages.

A highly GHG emissive food diet could potentially include processed and packaged food as lot of energy/additives is spent in the process, foods that are transported across the countries through shipping and frozen food products that consume lot of energy to increase their shelf-life. Organic and sustainable farming is in general reported to have 2 to 3 times less emissions than that of the industrial farming practices.

Major example of high carbon food is the meat and associated meat products. This is because the livestock farming including lamps, poultry, beef and pork emit a lot of GHG during their operation. The livestock farming is estimated to contribute around 15% of global GHG emissions. The daily consumption of meat and associated meat products can be lowered once a day and be replaced with plant based foods.

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The second important high carbon food is the dairy products such as milk, cheese, butter, etc. This is found to be next largest GHG contributor after the meat sector. Especially, the GHG emission associated with cheese is very high as lot of milk and energy is consumed in the process. Instead of animal milk, plant based soy milk or almond milk can be good alternative.

And finally, it is important to reduce the food waste. Wasted foods undergo organic decomposition at the landfills and dump yards releasing methane, which is 25 times more harmful than CO2. Always take what you can eat. Buy and store foods for short period and consume them before they perish.

Consuming low carbon diet, such as plant based foods – spinach, vegetables, nuts, etc., are also good for the human health as they are high in fibre, rich in minerals and easy to digest. Though the consumption of high carbon food such as meat products cannot be 100% avoided, an optimal mix of meat and plant based food consumption – especially those are seasonal with less processing and packaging, can contribute a lot for towards reduction of the global GHG emissions.