

Digging for victory

Dig for climate - Clive Blazey, like Tim Flannery and others are so alarmed by recent polar melting, they believe climatic change will cause a global catastrophe and that we must put Australia and other countries on a war footing, just as Churchill did in WW2.

Prior to WWII, Britain imported over 55 million tons of food a year, mainly from Canada and the US (with a small contribution from Australia). When War broke out the ships transporting all this produce became targets of the German Navy so the food supply was cut and many of these merchant vessels were recommissioned to transport troops. The Government appointed Lord Woolton as the Minister of Food and he instituted the “Dig for Victory” campaign where people were encouraged to transform private gardens into mini-allotments.

The campaign extended beyond the backyard to any useable ground available including formal gardens, lawns and even sports pitches. These were transformed into allotments, large and small, and everybody on the home front was encouraged to become a vegetable gardener. Just like Havana in the mid-1990’s when Cuba was isolated by the US trade embargo and Soviet withdrawal, leaving it to fend for itself.



Whilst both of these instances were brought about by hardships that none of us would choose to endure, they provide valuable lessons about how resilient and resourceful we can be when we are put to it. Climate change may not immediately appear to be as urgent as a trade embargo or a World War, but if the sorts of warming we are beginning to see continue unabated then we may well be in a situation where we regret not acting earlier.

After taking care of your electricity and transport emissions, growing some (or all if you can) of your own food is something you can do that will make a difference. If you are tight for space check out local community allotments and shop at farmers markets. There are also subscription farming enterprises popping up where you can subscribe to a local food garden and you receive a box of locally grown produce every week.

We can all do our bit, so go on - get out there and “Dig for Climate”.

Digger’s staff cut CO₂ by 75% last year

Last year we surveyed our staff here at Digger’s, to see who had the smallest carbon footprint. We surveyed all aspects of our daily activities, both direct and indirect emissions, in order to get the whole picture.

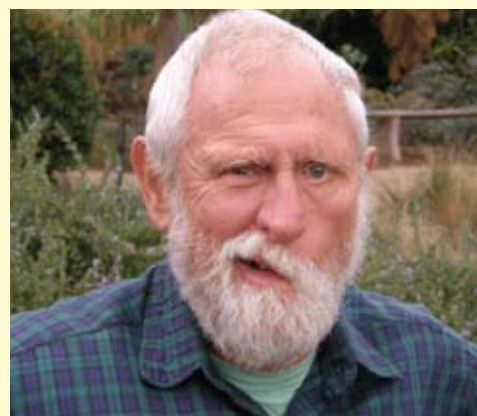
Rex Ennis – Digger’s Seed Gardener

Rex achieved one of the lowest scores by purchasing 100% “Greenpower”, offsetting his transport emissions through “Greenfleet”, and by growing 95% of his own vegetables year-round, thereby reducing his carbon emissions from food production to 1.51 tonnes p.a. (a 75% reduction).

Lou Larrieu – Digger’s Trials Manager

Lou’s results were impressive including transport offsets and “Greenpower”. Lou grows a significant proportion of produce in her garden, and what she cannot produce at home she buys from local growers (organic where possible). Importantly, Lou is a vegetarian, this cuts her annual emissions to 1.42 tonnes p.a. (a 78% reduction) as the emissions embodied in red meat are major contributors.

On average, Australians produce 5.35 tonnes of CO₂ a year in the provision of food. A 60% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2050 is the stated aim of the Australian Federal Government, so if we look at the food component of the picture, that would see us aiming at getting emissions down to 2.14 tonnes per year per capita. If you look at Rex and Lou’s CO₂ emissions for food you see that they have already exceeded this target (Rex’s by 75% and Lou’s by 78%) in 2007! Well done guys, you are an inspiration to us all!



Digger's Carbon Calculator For Food Gardeners.

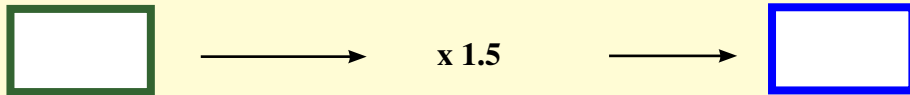
After trawling the internet for "Carbon Calculators" to see how it is best to estimate emissions, we could not find one that asks how much food you grow at home!!! Our diet comprises an average of 28% of our greenhouse emissions; this represents almost a third of our total emissions and nearly three times as much as transport. So if we take a closer look at this segment of the pie, we can make significant reductions by growing some of our own food right next to the backdoor. So we've devised our own calculator that emphasises the virtues of organic gardening and growing your own food at home – or nearby.

So if we assume that you have gone out and changed your electricity over to 100% "Greenpower", you've offset your emissions from your travel and you have reduced your consumption behaviours to a sustainable level, then you have only to work on your food production. So we've devised a carbon calculator that looks at the 28% of our emissions that relate to food to give you an estimate of how much carbon you are generating from the food you eat.

Answer these six questions and follow the calculations below to estimate the annual greenhouse emissions generated to produce the food you consume. Follow the instructions in the box below.

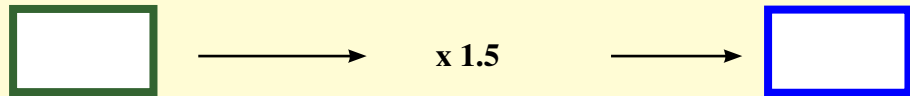
Question 1: In an average week, what proportion of fruit and vegetables come from your own garden?

1. 75%
2. 50-75%
3. 25-50%
4. 0-25%
5. None



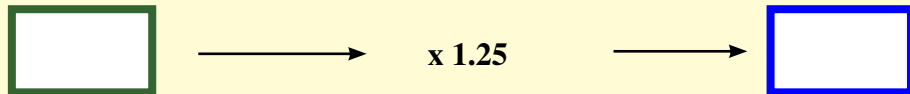
Question 2: In an average week, what proportion of your fruit and vegetables are grown within 100km of your house?

1. 75%
2. 50-75%
3. 25-50%
4. 0-25%
5. None



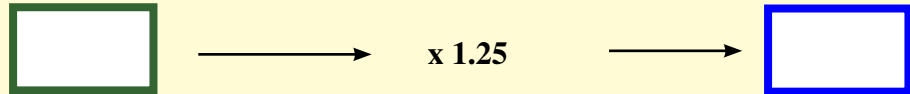
Question 3: How many serves of red meat do you consume in an average week (100g equals one serve?)

1. vegetarian
2. 1-2
3. 2-4
4. 4-6
5. 6+



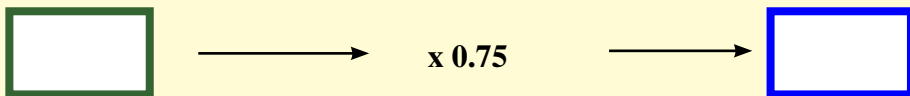
Question 4: How many serves of dairy do you consume in an average week? ((100ml of milk or 30g cheese, equals 1 serve).

1. vegan
2. 1-5
3. 5-10
4. 10+



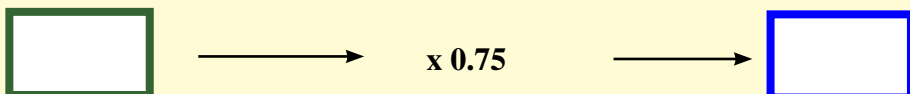
Question 5: What proportion of the food you buy in an average week is wholefood with minimal packaging?

1. 75%+
2. 50-75%
3. 25-50%
4. 10-25%
5. less than 10%



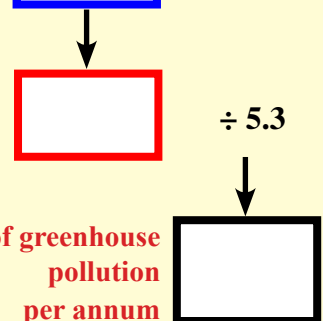
Question 6: Do you buy out of season / imported fresh foods?

1. no
2. yes.



INSTRUCTIONS

Select the NUMBER (left-most column) of the option that best fits your consumption and write it in the green box. Then multiply this by the figure given to give you a number for the blue box. Add all the numbers in the blue boxes and write this number in the red box. Divide the number in the red box by 5.3 as indicated – this is the estimate of your greenhouse pollution for one year's food.



Tonnes of greenhouse pollution per annum