OUR FOOD

Our Future

HUMAN ECOLOGY PROJECT

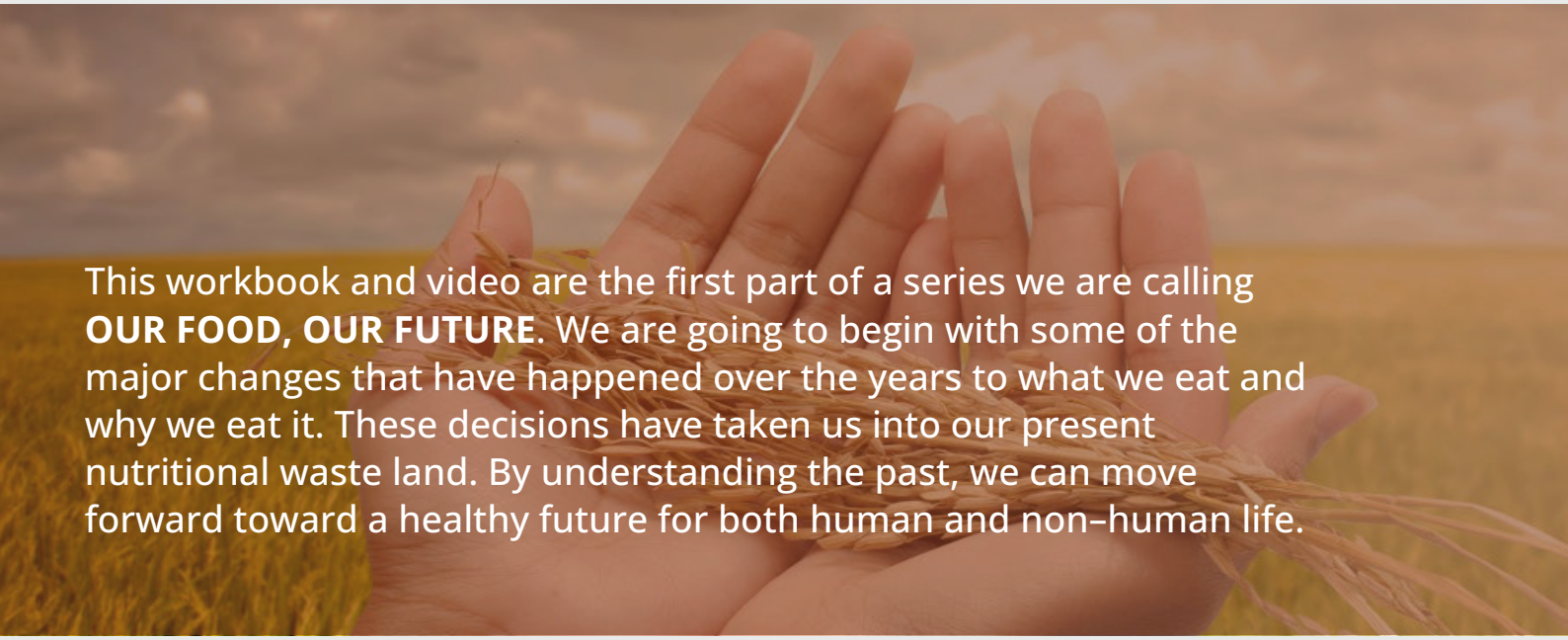
THE PERSONAL IS PLANETARY

The Human Ecology Project is dedicated to illustrating the connections between human actions and their effects on individual health, society, animals, and environmental impact. The unifying factor is the food we eat.

This is a

Human Ecology Project Workbook

What we eat is one of the most important relationships we have to the environment. It seems that we have forgotten that simple fact. Food is often seenas something manufactured and not a product of nature. We want to shine a little light on what makes sense regarding the human diet and why it is so importantright now that we make choices that serve not only personal health but the survival of planet earth.



This workbook and video are the first part of a series we are calling **OUR FOOD, OUR FUTURE**. We are going to begin with some of the major changes that have happened over the years to what we eat and why we eat it. These decisions have taken us into our present nutritional waste land. By understanding the past, we can move forward toward a healthy future for both human and non–human life.

Remember: The Personal Is Planetary

WATCH THE VIDEO: FOOD FOR OUR FUTURE, PART ONE

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYO9j8LJTWU&t=3s

Food for Our Future – Part One

MIGRATION

From our ancient origins, human life has migrated to almost every location on the planet. We have settled in deep jungles, arctic tundra, deserts, and forests. Our primary concern has always been to find food. It is a matter of life or death. We did not have to concern ourselves with eating locally or in season; we ate what was available. The forces of nature were always in charge.

ENVIRONMENT

If there was an abundance of nutritious plants, that was where we focused our efforts; if the soil was poor or the growing season short, we used animals. We discovered over time that out of the 400,000 species of plants there are only about 200 plants that we decided to focus on.[1]

These were not decisions we made in a conference hall.

1 https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/why-do-we-consume-only-a-tiny-fractionof-the-world-s-edible-plants

Our food habits have certainly changed over the centuries. Most dramatically over the past 100 years. It is during this period that food moved out of the home kitchen and became manufactured on a mass scale. We lost control of our food and passed it over to an industry.

They were practical actions aimed at staying alive and creating homeostasis — that life–producing relationship with nature that governs all life.

A big part of our adaptation was our ability to alter the quality of the food available to meet our needs. We learned to grow specific foods, cook, preserve, ferment, and otherwise make simple changes in the plants we relied on for our well–being.[2]

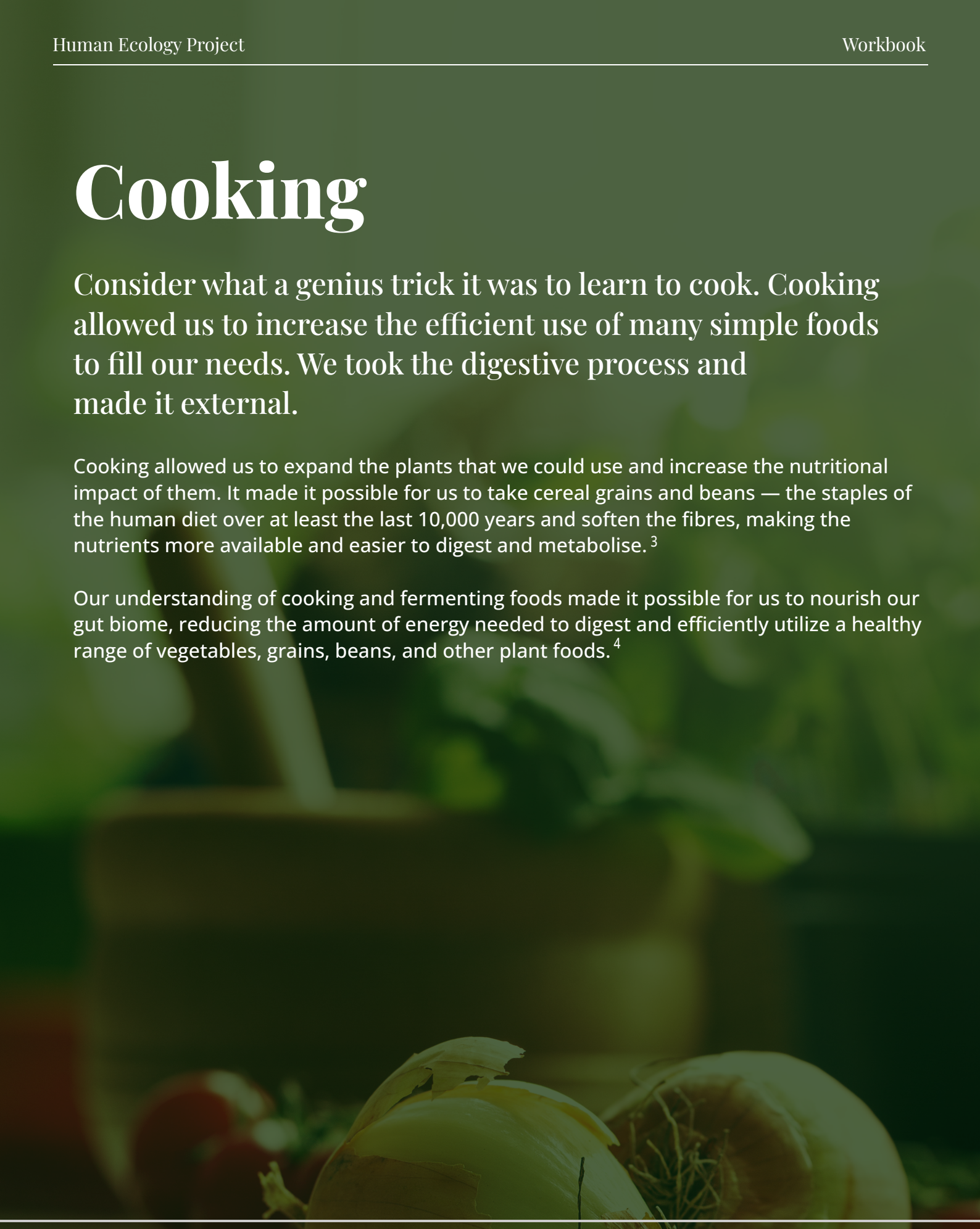
2 https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg23230980-600-every-human-culture-includes-cooking-this-is-how

Cooking

Consider what a genius trick it was to learn to cook. Cooking allowed us to increase the efficient use of many simple foods to fill our needs. We took the digestive process and made it external.

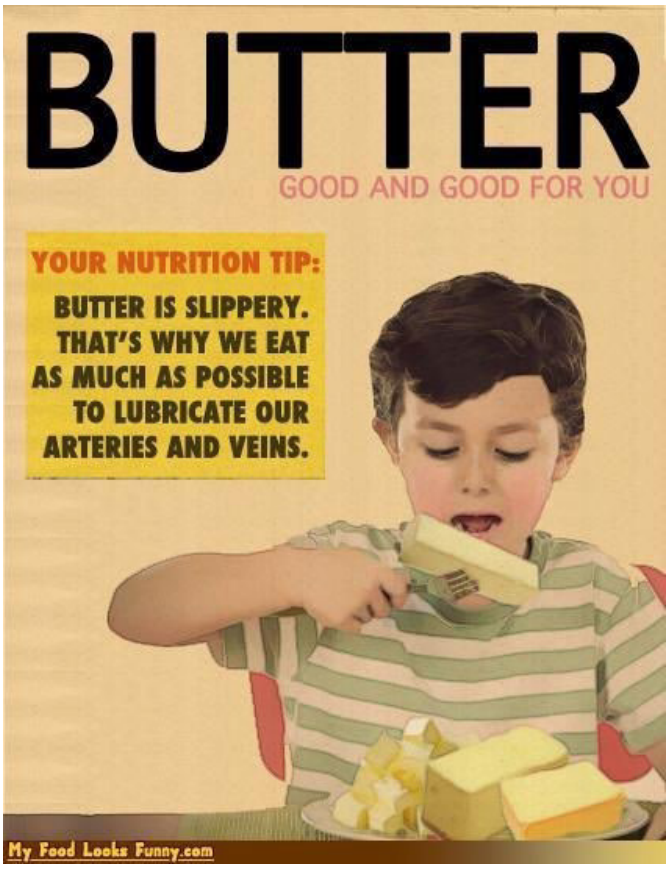
Cooking allowed us to expand the plants that we could use and increase the nutritional impact of them. It made it possible for us to take cereal grains and beans — the staples of the human diet over at least the last 10,000 years and soften the fibres, making the nutrients more available and easier to digest and metabolise. [3]

Our understanding of cooking and fermenting foods made it possible for us to nourish our gut biome, reducing the amount of energy needed to digest and efficiently utilize a healthy range of vegetables, grains, beans, and other plant foods. [4]



3 https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/cooking-nutrient-content

4 https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/326527#Cooked-foods-alter-bacterial-diversity



The generation that had grown up during the Great Depression and endured the Second World War wanted an easier life. Food became a primary commercial focus in this quest. Food was marketed as more streamlined, modern, and convenient. Brands fought to establish their fame on either health claims or taste. Corporate America used the desire for an easy life to sell easy–to–prepare food regardless of the impact on our wellbeing.[5] [6]

The application of new technologies created a diet that was more of a science project.

Advertising replaced sound nutritional advice and created the powerful mythologies that dominate the social understanding of a healthy diet. These myths were not driven by either common sense or science they are driven by corporate greed. This industry is so large and powerful that its influence on governments and science carry a huge weight.[7] Self–regulation by the food industry and government recommendations do not work. There is however a powerful tool available to us all every day. [8] [9]

5 https://environmental-conscience.com/convenience-food-pros-cons/
6 https://www.onegreenplanet.org/natural-health/convenience-foods-not-so-convenient-for-your-health/
7 https://www.statista.com/topics/2223/food-advertising/#topicHeader__wrapper
8 https://www.newfoodmagazine.com/news/132399/bmj-self-regulation/
9 https://www.nature.com/articles/ejcn201460

Our power as consumers. Wha we choose to purchase and what we reject can be a force for good. Those choices need to be based on a new understanding of our food that addresses the primary issues that affect us all. Let's look at some of the problems and then address the solutions.

Nutrition is not complex. There is a new vision of what should guide our thinking about the food we eat. It takes us back to our origins. There is an emerging food ethic that will drive any movement toward a healthy diet in the future.

It means considering four areas of concern when making our food choices:

- A healthy diet needs to be productive of human wellbeing,
- It needs to be environmentally sustainable,
- It needs to be generous in its ability to feed the world without exploitation,
- It must be a diet that is based on plants and not the killing of animals.

What is generally accepted is that the modern diet is a direct cause of many of the Non–Communicable Diseases such as Heart Disease, Diabetes, Stroke, Many Cancers, and Immune Disorders. As many as 11 million deaths are caused in the world each year by diet related issues, we are eating ourselves to death. [10] [11]

10 https://www.healthdata.org/news-release/new-study-finds-poor-diet-kills-morepeople-globally-tobacco-and-high-blood-pressure

11 https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736(19)30041-8/fulltext

The mechanisms are well understood and are the result of a diet that is characterised by high caloric intake and low nutritional values. It is a consequence of a diet that is dominated by increased focus on fats, increased consumption of refined sugars, salt and chemicals and super–sized portions. It is a diet lacking in fibre, complex carbohydrate, vitamins, or the required range of minerals to produce health. [12]

The solution to preventable human health issues is a healthy diverse vegan diet. Arguments against this approach to nutrition are simply the death rattles of out–of–date science, commercial greed, advertising, and mistaken social beliefs.

Big Agriculture

Modern Agribusiness depends on using a toxic mix of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

The use of these chemicals not only kill the biological life within the soil. If the soil dies, we all will suffer the consequences. Big Agriculture is a major source of pollution to ground water, rivers, streams and eventually the oceans of the world. This is damage driven by greed — not need. [13] [14]

12 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6146358/
13 https://foodprint.org/issues/how-industrial-agriculture-affects-our-water/
14 https://www.eea.europa.eu/signals/signals-2015/articles/agriculture-and-climate-change

Cutting Food Miles

Our food system depends on a false image of diversity by shipping food long distances out of season. The pattern of this system undermines local production, product freshness and requires increased transport and refrigeration of foods. The carbon footprint of our food grows by the year.

Food Waste

The modern diet also promotes excessive food waste. Up to 45% of the food purchased in America ends up as waste. Waste serves the financial goals of big business, the more you buy the more you waste, the more you waste the more you buy. [15] [16]

An Ethical Diet

Having a diet that is based on needless pain, suffering and death should cause us all to pause and reflect on our actions. There is no reason to continue this cycle of pain outside of personal pleasure. This diet has completely altered the environment of the planet, the killing of animals has required the destruction of forest lands, oceans, fresh water, soil, and the atmosphere as well. Our destructive actions ripple out causing damage that lies beyond our awareness. [17] [18] Applying a consistent ethic of do not harm would help us create a diet that produces health for both human and non–human life.

15 https://www.unep.org/thinkeatsave/get-informed/worldwide-food-waste
16 https://toogoodtogo.com/en-us/movement/knowledge/what-food-is-wasted
17 https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/sep/13/meat-greenhouses-gasesfood-production-study
18 https://interactive.carbonbrief.org/what-is-the-climate-impact-of-eating-meat-anddairy/

Diet & Social Justice

Consider this, there are over **800,000** people who live in a state of hunger.

This figure is contrasted against the 700 million who are obese.[19] 17% of the Children in America live with food scarcity. Many industries including agriculture have contributed to shortages of drinkable water.[20] This is in an America where there is a water menu in high–end restaurants so that guests can choose the pure water of their choice.

Consider this, the modern food web means that local farmers lose their land and are forced to work on plantations that grow food for export rather than raise food for their own families and community. [21] [22]

Consider this, developed countries such as America have food desserts where the only foods available to urban populations are fast-foods and there is little or no access to fresh produce. Fast food, manufactured to sell at a cheap price is a criminal enterprise that results in disease and obesity among children and the poor.

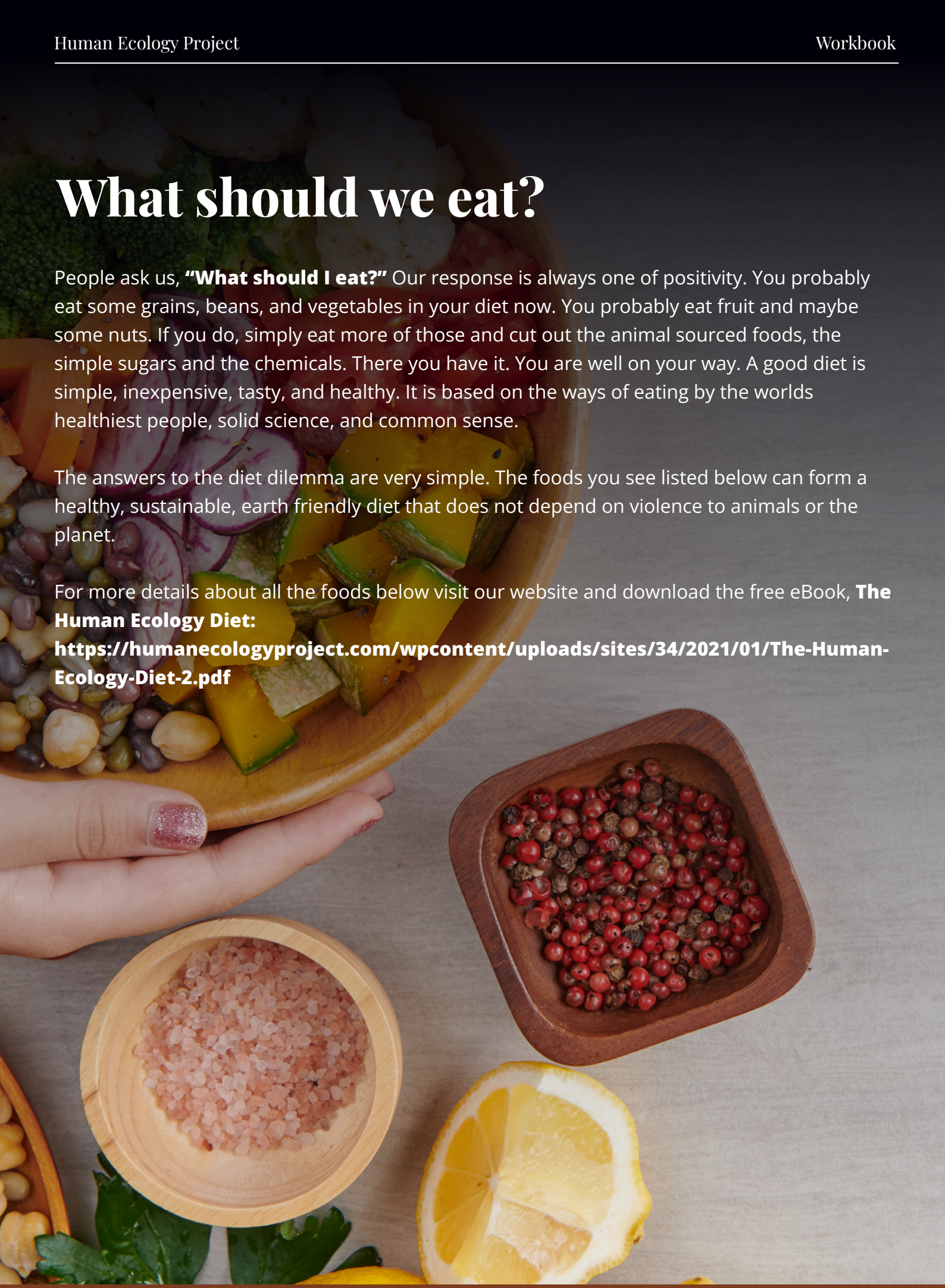
19 https://healthpolicy-watch.news/hunger-obesity-both-rising-worldwide-says-unreport/
20 https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/how-industries-are-affecting-access-to-safedrinking-water/124893/
21 https://www.fao.org/3/i5251e/i5251e.pdf
22 https://politicsofpoverty.oxfamamerica.org/smallholder-farmers-agricultural-investors-at-risk/?_gl=1

What should we eat?

People ask us, **"What should I eat?"** Our response is always one of positivity. You probably eat some grains, beans, and vegetables in your diet now. You probably eat fruit and maybe some nuts. If you do, simply eat more of those and cut out the animal sourced foods, the simple sugars and the chemicals. There you have it. You are well on your way. A good diet is simple, inexpensive, tasty, and healthy. It is based on the ways of eating by the worlds healthiest people, solid science, and common sense.

The answers to the diet dilemma are very simple. The foods you see listed below can form a healthy, sustainable, earth friendly diet that does not depend on violence to animals or the planet.

For more details about all the foods below visit our website and download the free eBook, **The Human Ecology Diet: https://humanecologyproject.com/wpcontent/uploads/sites/34/2021/01/The-Human-Ecology-Diet-2.pdf**



Grains

Seeds and nuts have been our most important foods over the past 10,000 years of human history.

Among all our foods, cereal grains have the broadest range of nutrients, and are the most effective foundation for a healthy diet. They are a valuable source of usable carbohydrate, and supply fats, vitamins, minerals, and amino acids.

If cereal grains were fully exploited, they would form the foundation for a healthy human diet. They would more than meet human needs for essential amino acids, the famous building blocks of protein. **The grain grown to feed.**

Beans

Legumes are beans and pulses. They are a natural complement to grains in most traditional diets. Combined with unrefined cereals they provide an excellent balance of nutrients. Cereal grains supply our essential carbohydrate, and beans give us more protein and soluble fibre. Beans are usually prepared by long cooking or even re–cooking. The use of fermented soybeans, as developed in Asia, has been a particularly useful addition to a healthy, earth–friendly diet.

Miso Soup

Soya foods have been popular animal–protein substitutes since the 1970s because of their high protein content. By focusing on the protein alone no attention was paid to the fact that soya on its own is not easy to digest. In Asia soya was almost always fermented or simply processed. Products such as miso paste, soya sauce and tempeh are processed in a way that increases digestibility and makes the protein more bioavailable.

Vegetables

Vegetables reflect the changing of the seasons, the different colors that they show indicate the phytonutrients that are in the foods. A good guideline is to always try and eat any perishable food from local sources and in the season of its growth. Be particular about organic quality. There are hundreds of varieties of vegetables.

Cruciferous vegetables

Cruciferous vegetables are very important for most people living in the northern hemisphere in a four season's climate.

Squash

Squash is a very diverse family of vegetables that originate in the northern hemisphere in the Americas, the cultivation of food crops in both North and South America rotated around maize (corn), beans and squash.

Roots & Tubers

Roots and tubers are vegetables that grow below the ground and most of the roots and tubers have been used traditionally as good sources of complex carbohydrate all over the world. Roots are the energy storage system of the plant. These foods are nutritionally dense and have traditionally been considered as essentials to a healthy diet.

They have often been used as a primary food source when climate or other environmental conditions were not favorable to growing grain. Some tubers have an even broader range of nutrients than grains. Before grain cultivation and in semi–tropical climates they were most likely the principal foods for humans. are processed in a way that increases digestibility and makes the protein more bioavailable.

Hearty Greens

Hearty Greens are a basic requirement for healthy eating. Some cruciferous vegetables mentioned earlier will fit into this category. If you are eating a plant–based diet, it is very important to have green vegetables every day. The unique concentration of nutrients in dark green vegetables lie in the rich mix of vitamins and minerals.

Light Greens

Raw foods are helpful in cleaning out the gut and dissolving fatty tissue. Have small amounts of raw food daily — but remember it's easy to eat too much of it in a cooler climate.

These salad vegetables are relaxing and refreshing by nature. Vegetables reflect the seasons, so let the seasons be your guide.

Fermented Vegetables

Fermented Vegetables are important probiotics, good to have in small portions daily. Sauerkraut, one of the most common, is easy to make. Making fresh fermented foods can really promote a healthy gut biome. There are good quality commercial sauerkrauts on the market but making it at home is a satisfying project.

Sprouting

Sprouting is a good way of having salads that add LIGHT freshness in your diet all year round. Sprouting seeds or beans is, simply, germinating them. You rinse seeds to clean them, and then soak them — drain the seeds, and rinse at regular intervals. As the beans germinate the nutrients are broken down and become more available.

Possible Discussion Topics

1. Why has our diet become so environmentally harmful?

2. Can you think of three things that could make your diet healthier?

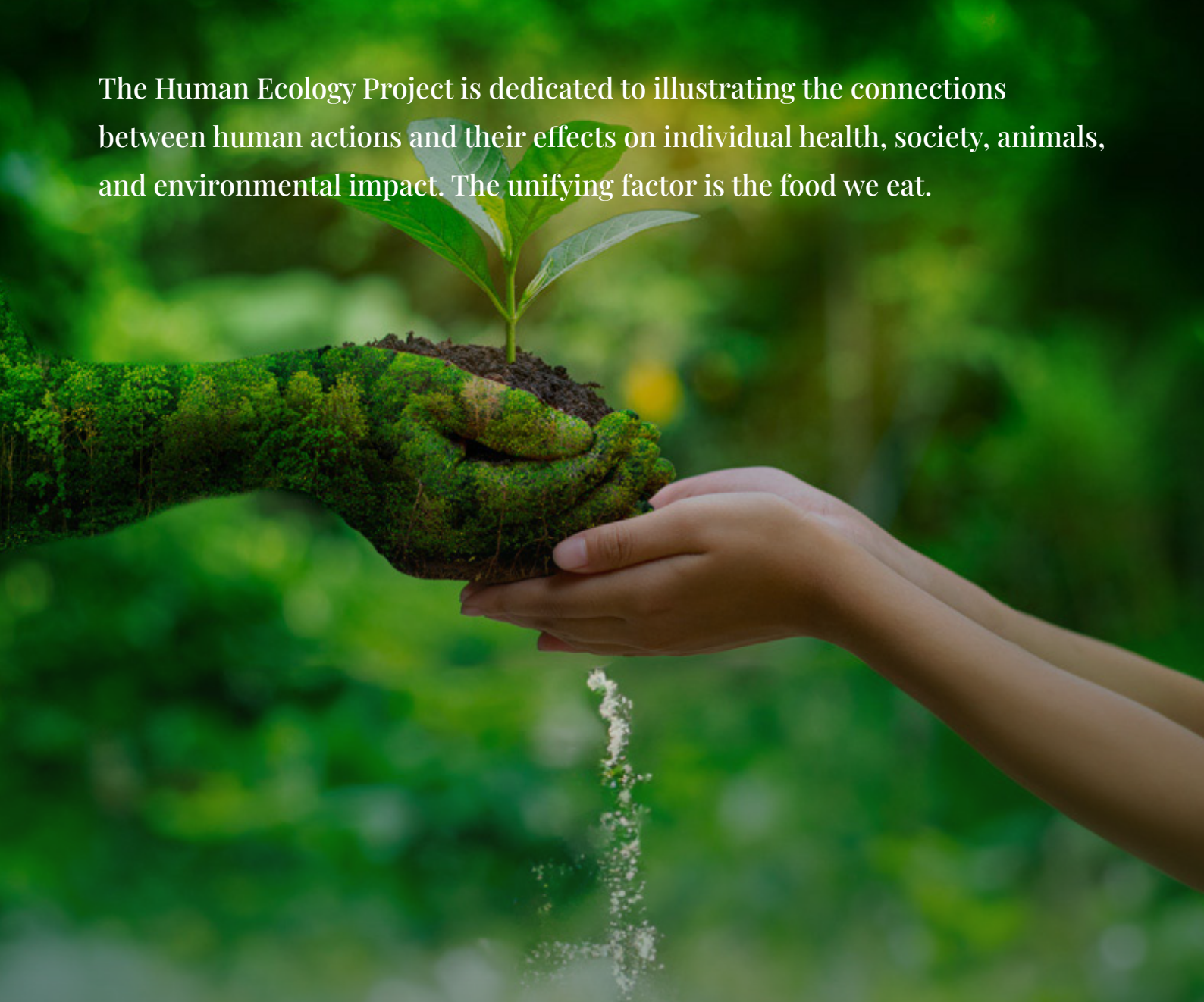
3. What is your social experience with those who reject healthy food?

4. What are the primary environmental concerns for you regarding diet?

5. Could we really end food scarcity by adjusting our own diet?

6. Is cooking essential for eating a good diet?

7. What is the impact of water use on exotic Vegan foods?



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Human Ecology Project
71-75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London, WC2H 9JQ

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Human Ecology Project is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization in the USA

Email: billandmarlene@humanecologyproject.com

www.humanecologyproject.com

Sea Vegetables

In some parts of the world, sea vegetables are traditionally consumed in moderate amounts regularly, to provide a balanced intake of minerals. We normally associate their use with Japan and Korea, but they were also part of the traditional Scottish and Irish diet.

Fruit

Fruits are in general, very perishable. So, they are best eaten fresh, and in season (and local, where possible). Tropical fruits are the highest in sugars and acid; fruits grown further from the equator have less sugar. Drinking the juice of fruits is not the best form of consumption, since the sugars are more concentrated, and the buffering agents and fiber have been removed. Sugars are also concentrated in dried fruits, so a raisin has more sugar content than a grape.

Nuts & Seeds

Seeds and Nuts are an excellent source of protein and fat. When unshelled, they are easy to store for a long time. Once shelled, they are susceptible to rancidity if left at room temperature, unless preserved with salt. They may be used as condiments with grains or vegetable dishes or roasted as a snack. Roasting nuts and seeds release their oils, making them easier to digest.

Water

One of the most important nutrients is water. If we are lucky enough to have good water available, we should take advantage of it. In many parts of the world there is not enough clean water. That situation even exists in developed countries where there is pollution in urban water supplies.

The current approach to growing our food and the wasteful use of water in raising animals for food is creating a massive shortage in the worlds drinkable water.