

# THINK-TANK

Education, population, poverty, tax...getting views on topics like those in Jersey isn't the difficult part – but have you ever noticed how many people sound eminently credible when talking about them, even though they may actually be basing their views on conjecture, false facts and blind guesswork?

There is a real danger in making the 'facts' fit the opinion, rather than the other way around – which is exactly the point at which someone with an eye on the latest buzzwords will smugly insert the phrase 'post-truth' into the conversation, imagining its actually helpful.

So, we've asked the Jersey Policy Forum to add some robust material to those crucial local debates – the point is not to provoke agreement or acquiescence; it is to provide reliable material on which others can build their views.

By Gailina Liew, Executive Director, Jersey Policy Forum



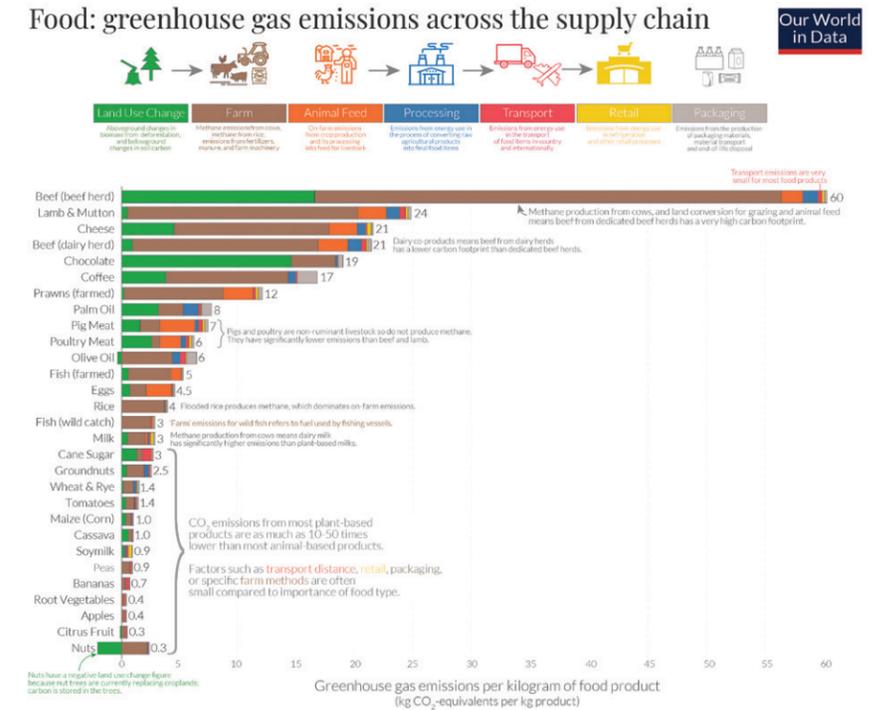
## Your life really is your choices

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released its 11th annual Emissions Gap Report on December 9, 2020 (see [www.unep.org/emissions-gap-report-2020](http://www.unep.org/emissions-gap-report-2020)). A very relevant and worthwhile read in light of the Climate Assembly's current deliberations and recommendations to come later in the year. So, what does the latest UNEP report reveal?

The report shows that to limit the rise in the earth's global average temperature to no more than 1.5° Celsius by 2030 (as agreed by 195 countries in the 2015 Paris Agreement), ideally each person on the planet should not produce more than 2.1 tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (tCO2e) per year (calculated by using the cap on global emissions divided by the number of people in the world) – let's call this each person's 'fair share'. According to the report, 70% of total global emissions result directly from what we choose to eat and how we choose to travel. So, what does this mean in real life and our personal choices?

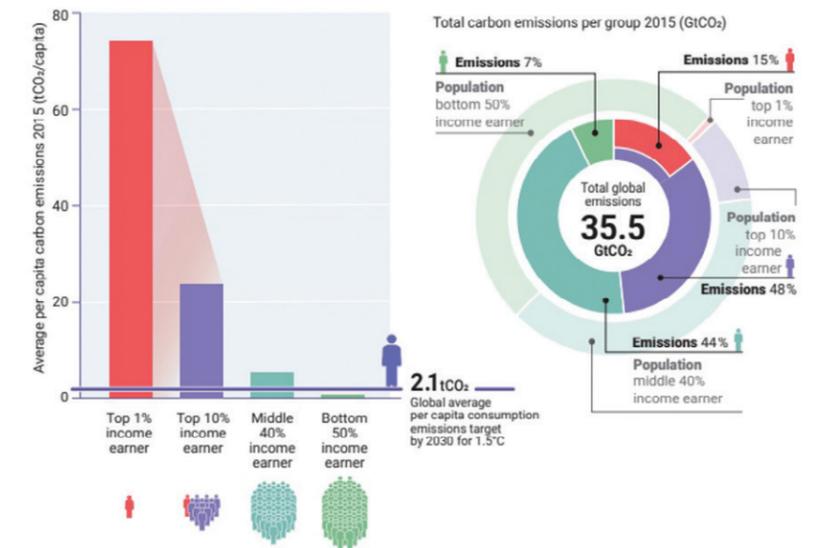
Turns out that a single long-haul return flight burns up 90% of a person's "fair share"- it's 30% for a medium-haul return flight – from this perspective, flying to Spain or Portugal results in 3 times less

emissions than flying to Thailand. In terms of food, there is a widely held belief that 'eating local' or 'meat from sustainable sources' will significantly reduce our environmental footprint but it's actually the choice of food that makes the biggest emissions difference. An Our World in Data report (<https://ourworldindata.org/food-choice-vs-eating-local>) shows the greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram of food product for many of our common foods – it wasn't surprising to see beef at the top of the list at 60. What made me really sit up was seeing cheese at 21, chocolate at 19, coffee at 17 and then pork at 7, poultry at 6, wild fish at 3 and nuts with the lowest emissions at 0.3. A personal choice to serve chicken instead of beef for family tea would reduce the emissions for that meal by 90% or 95% if fish was the main course – that was staggering to understand. The data also shows that land use (green in the chart below) and farming (brown) accounts for the lion's share of emissions in the food supply chain followed by the use of animal feed (orange) and processing (blue) – transport, retail mode and packaging account for a very small proportion of the total emissions per food type.



Note: Greenhouse gas emissions are given as global average values based on data across 38,700 commercially viable farms in 119 countries. Data source: Poore and Nemecek (2018). Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers. Science. Images sourced from the Noun Project. OurWorldInData.org - Research and data to make progress against the world's largest problems. Licensed under CC-BY by the author Hannah Ritchie.

### Per capita and absolute CO<sub>2</sub> consumption emissions by four global income groups in 2015



Global Income group	Annual earnings (2015 USD)	Annual average per capita tCO <sub>2</sub> e	Change to get to carbon "fair share"
Top 1%	> \$109,000	74	97% cut
Top 10%	> \$38,000	23	971% cut
Bottom 50%	> \$6,000	0.7	300% increase