

Consuming Food By Faith:

Sustainable Eating Compatibility with Religious Morals and Practices

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ABSTRACT

The major Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam provide moral guidelines which promote sustainable food choices. Judaism and Islam have strict dietary guidelines known as *kosher* and *halal* respectively, which followers practice in their daily behaviors. Christianity differs in that no dietary restrictions are presented, either historically or ecumenically. Sustainable consumption amounts to the impact that the production of food has on the environment. How are the teachings of these faiths compatible with sustainable eating habits? At a time of much environmental concern, religious morals can be compatible with sustainable practices to impact personal decisions within daily behaviors and habits.

METHODS

The modern movement toward becoming a sustainable global society coupled with an interest in religious food traditions served as a foundation for this research. Much material has been presented on the sustainable consumption and religious traditions separately, but rarely have the two intersected. By focusing on holy scriptures from each tradition i.e. *Torah*, Bible and *Qu'ran*, teachings from each faiths' prophets found in the *Talmud*, *Hadiths* and *Sunnah* and culminating with contemporary research and practices allowed for a holistic view of the issue to be presented in a modern context. Influential books on sustainable eating like Michael Pollan's *Omnivores' Dilemma* and Marion Nestle's *What to Eat?* offered insights to sustainable eating practices. This information, cross-referenced with religious dietary guidelines and laws, proved valuable as it brought the historical aspect of religious tradition to a recognizable, contemporary setting. Consumers throughout the world can find familiarity within their given religion to progress towards sustainable lifestyles.

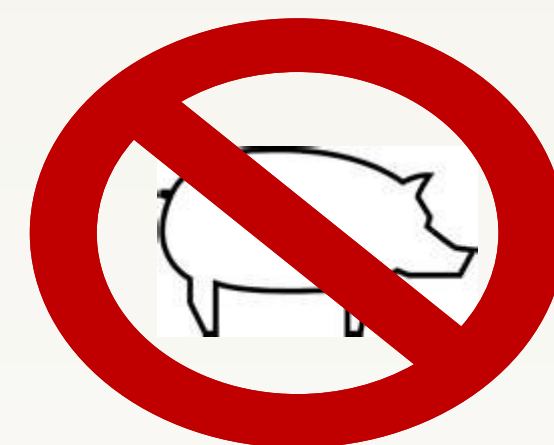
Sustainable Eating and Religion: Compatibility



Religion, food and sustainability make up the three sides of the triangle. The connection between the three serves as the basis of researching the potential for the Abrahamic traditions' compatibility with sustainable eating habits. The morals that drive the followers of these habits relate to those used in modern sustainable development movements.




ECO-KOSHER & ECO-HALAL Movements

Modern movements considering both religious dietary laws and ecological sustainability practices. Using morals from each respective faith, lifestyle guidelines beyond food have been formed to allow followers to have less impact on the environment while focusing on increasing the religious experience. Arthur Waskow of the Shalom Center champions the concept of Eco-Kosher in America, and suggests that the practice could carry to non-Jewish peoples.



- Pork is forbidden in Kosher and Halal diets.
- The religious slaughtering process causes more suffering to animals than the conventional method.

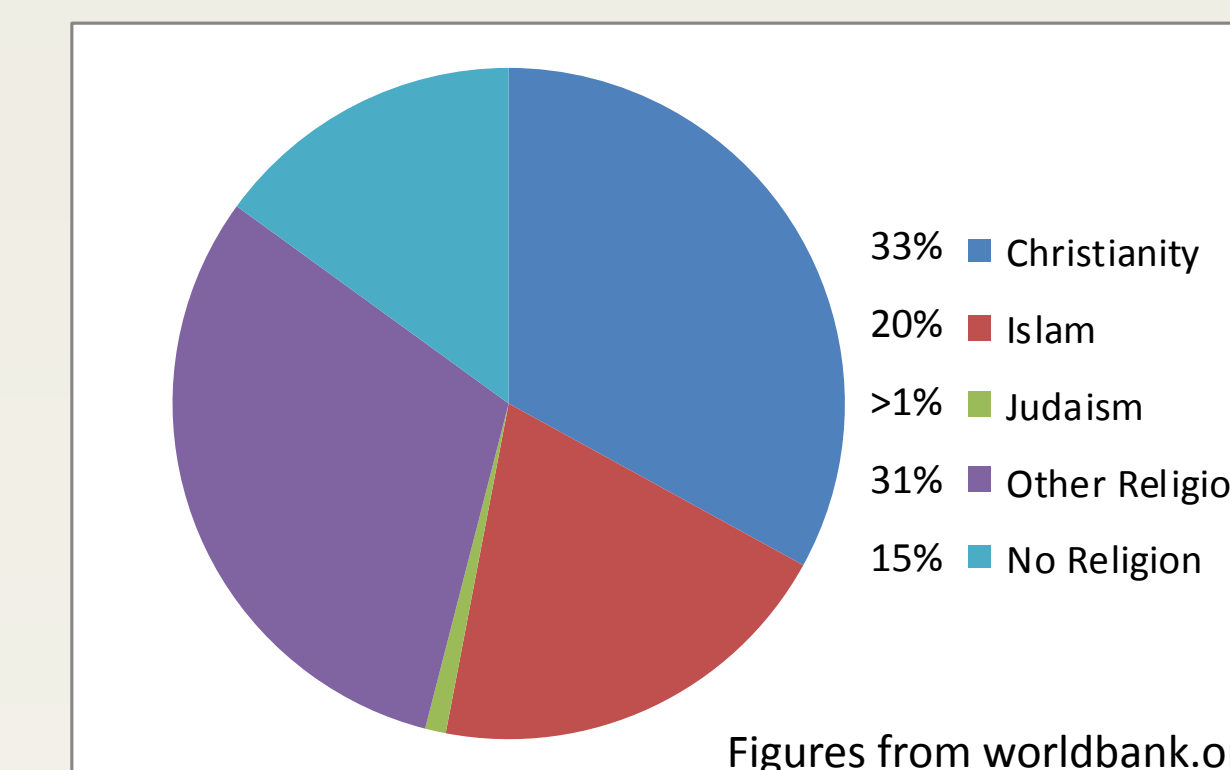
Morals Promoting Sustainable Eating

Judaism 	<i>Bal Taschit</i> – treat creation with respect and care. <i>Tzaar Baalei Chayyim</i> – avoid cruelty toward animals and creation. <i>Shmirat Haguf</i> – care for the human body and humankind as a whole.
Christianity 	Stewardship– humankind's role within creation as intended by God. Community– caring for followers of God. Hierarchy– ability to transmit interpretations throughout the faith.
Islam 	<i>Ramadan</i> – a month of fasting. <i>Khilafa</i> – the role of humankind as caretaker of creation. <i>Fitra</i> – respecting the natural order of creation.

Implementing Religious Morals into a Sustainable Diet

By choosing local and organic products, consumers can reduce their impact on the environment. Each of the Abrahamic traditions discusses humankind's role as caretaker of creation. Reducing the amount of energy used to produce and transport food, reducing the amount of chemicals introduced into the environment and reducing the amount of irrigated water to grow food will steward the earth in a sustainable manner. Sustainable diets differ from region to region, but with a focus on local and organic products, sustainable development of the current food system can increase dramatically.

World Religion Distribution



Over half the world's population subscribes to Judaism, Christianity or Islam. All but 16% of the world follows some form of religion. "Mobilizing even a fraction of adherents to the cause of building a just and environmentally healthy society could advance the sustainability agenda dramatically." (Gary Gardner)

CONCLUSION

- . The Jewish kosher diet shows the most potential for a sustainable lifestyle with strong inclinations toward vegetarianism and moral practices focused on ecological responsibility and care.
- . The Islamic halal diet allows Muslims to keep morals centered in eating habits, though lacks, most notably, in the area of animal welfare.
- . Christianity offers many morals promoting sustainable eating. With no dietary guidelines, no restrictions prohibit fully employing a sustainable diet.

Religion and sustainability movements employ similar morals and can be used jointly to expand each other's significance. Living with the morals taught in the three Abrahamic traditions daily will allow the individual to impact their society, environment and world in a positive manner to be shared amongst all people.

Further Reference:

- Arthur Waskow, The Shalom Center
 Altmuslim.com *The Eco-Halal movement*. 2010.
 Marion Nestle. *What to Eat?* 2006.
 Michael Pollan. *Omnivores' Dilemma*, 2006.
 Gary Gardner. *Inspiring Progress: Religions' Contributions to Sustainable Development*, 2006.

