



Book Review – How Bad Are Bananas?

(Mike Berners-Lee Published by Profile Books, widely available)

This is a companion book to No Planet B and is intended as a reference work to help you make daily decisions to reduce your carbon footprint. We are in a climate emergency which is man-made and as responsible citizens we want to do something about it.

The author steers us towards a 5 tonne lifestyle, a level of annual CO₂ emissions per individual he has reduced from 10 tonnes in the 2009 edition.

Examples include leaving the lights on; 15kg CO₂e a year for a 5-watt low-energy bulb, 300 kg CO₂e for a 100W incandescent bulb. Take a 250g pack of asparagus; 270g CO₂e local and seasonal pack, 4.7kg CO₂e the same pack airfreighted from Peru. In answer to the headline question 'How Bad Are Bananas?' the answer is that you can eat them with a clear conscience because although they travel a huge distance they arrive in bulk by sea.

Even funerals are covered. The range is 410kg for a cremation up to 840kg for a field burial, but the main thing is that you have shuffled off this mortal coil – death is a full stop to your carbon footprint!

Mike Berners-Lee writes in a most enjoyable good-humoured style, participates in on-line webinars and replies to emails. In addition to writing books he has a consultancy advising businesses and organisations on their carbon footprints. This experience in drilling down in to many industrial processes puts him in a very good position to calculate the maths behind this book.

Cutting our own carbon footprint makes feel good but doesn't get away from the fact that the climate emergency requires a lot of work from our politicians, diplomats and legislators. Businesses, councils and other public bodies need to mirror our individual actions in order to make big reductions to CO₂ emissions. The later part of the book summarises the individual actions we can take before going on to explain how we must push for change. In no particular order, we should try to influence family, friends and social contacts, work, school, college or university, shops and supply chains and, finally, politicians.

In short, do not be embarrassed about bringing the conversation round to climate change – make your views known if you feel strongly. Engage supermarkets by complaining about excess packaging and wastage. Question election candidates and use your vote to support people who can and will make a difference.