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BIODIVERSITY FIGHTS CANCER AND HEART DISEASE WITH GRASS-FED MEAT

Juicy steaks from cattle grazing flower-rich pastures can stop you getting heart disease and cancer.

That's the claim of a new study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. It calls on the Government to give more support to pasture farming making use of species-rich grasslands. Not only does meat from these pastures taste better, it also contains more health-protecting nutrients including omega-3 fatty acids, DHA, thought to protect against heart disease, and CLA, a powerful anti-cancer agent.

The study comes as a powerful endorsement of the ideas set out in the book *The Carbon Fields*, from award-winning food and environment writer Graham Harvey. In the book he calls for a move to pasture-based farming in place of our current dependency on industrial grains. He argues that such a shift would give the British people healthier, tastier foods while protecting our environment and rural communities.

Author of the new study – Professor Henry Buller of Exeter University – backs many of the book's claims. He cites taste panel tests showing consumers prefer the taste of pasture-fed foods. He also reports the results of scientific analyses – included in Harvey's book – showing pasture-fed foods to be higher in many health-protecting nutrients.

Professor Buller even backs Harvey's argument that only pasture-fed foods can be genuinely considered "local". He says: "The British notion of local has become far too fixed on distance. Locality should be about the quality of the place and the relationship between the agricultural and the ecological landscape."

The new ESRC study was inspired by the French tradition linking the ecology of the landscape to healthy foods. Many French farmers maintain the biodiversity of their grasslands in a bid protect the taste and health qualities of their food.

Now a growing number of British farmers are using natural and species-rich grassland such as salt marsh, heather and moorland to graze their cattle, sheep and lambs.

The ESRC report calls on policy-makers to support this kind of farming in the UK. Such a move would bring real benefits for consumers as well as for the environment, it says.

For the full story of why pasture-fed meat and dairy foods are the real healthy option, read *The Carbon Fields*.

The Carbon Fields
How our countryside can save Britain
ISBN: 978-0-9560707-0-8

- *The Carbon Fields* by Graham Harvey. For review copies or author interviews please contact Will Barnard at Grassroots, Ph. 07866 747688, e-mail William.barnard@grassrootsfood.co.uk
- Graham Harvey won the BP Natural World Book Prize for *The Killing of the Countryside*.
- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (2009, January 14). Biodiversity Passes The Taste Test And Is Healthier Too. ESRC. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2009/january/biodiversity.aspx?ComponentId=30312&SourcePageId=20654>

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