

Can the Doughnut Economy also be vegan?

Cynthia Pallandt and Indra Gesink investigate

Recently, Dunkin' Donuts introduced no less than 43 vegan varieties to their offering, in the Netherlands, our home country. With the plant-based Dutch thinking about doughnuts, we were happy to take advantage, and that moved us to bring up Doughnut Economics. We explain the model, and examine the position of non-human animals in it. The main question: Can Raworth's doughnut also go vegan?



What is the Doughnut Economy?

The idea of the Doughnut Economy was designed by economist Kate Raworth (pronounced Ray-worth). The doughnut consists of two boundaries: a social floor and an ecological ceiling. By being "inside" the doughnut, these boundaries are respected rather than crossed. The social floor is derived from the social Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, and the ecological ceiling from the planetary boundaries as described by earth scientists at the Stockholm Resilience Center. Not a single one of the Doughnut's indicators should exceed a boundary.

Today's economy still breaks many of these boundaries. On the one hand, for example, we emit far too much CO₂ and the water quality is poor; on the other hand, people live in poverty and we have not yet achieved equality of opportunity. The Doughnut and the Doughnut Economy are designed to change this on both a social and ecological level, and thus revolutionize economic thinking. The Doughnut has also been called the compass for the new economy for the current century. Using it in this way changes the image of a 'successful country', and all countries become 'developing countries'. Vietnam currently scores best according to the Doughnut (1). The Netherlands - where the authors live - does relatively well with respect to the social floor, but is among the countries that exceed the ecological ceiling the most (2). The book *Doughnut Economics* came out in 2018 and has stirred up a lot in terms of social discussion among a large and broad audience.

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How vegan is the Doughnut right now?

The Doughnut and the indicators on which it is based are derived from the human point of view, and do not yet explicitly consider other animals. This tension is also visible in the interview with Kate Raworth by Marianne Thieme, the previous leader of the Dutch political Party for the Animals, shown in the documentary *#Powerplant*. Raworth presents the question behind the Doughnut Economy as 'How do we manage this incredibly unique planetary household within the needs of all its inhabitants?' But when a vegetarian or vegan diet is discussed, only its ecological but not its animal-friendly impact is named (3).

Non-human animals are not explicitly named in the Doughnut model, but they are of course part of the ecological indicator 'biodiversity'. In that light, it is not their individual rights or their welfare that is of concern, but the survival of their species. The preservation of species sometimes works out particularly bad for the welfare of individuals, however. For example, when they are kept and bred in captivity.

Among the other ecological indicators, non-human animals are at least as important as humans. Climate change, acidification of the ocean, and saturation of the soil with phosphates and nitrates are making it more difficult for individual animals to survive. The habitat changes, which displaces certain species and causes others to take their place.

Thus indirectly, wild animals are taken into account with the Doughnut. But the animals kept by humans as domestic or agricultural animals, or the animals that share people's habitats and are sometimes seen as a nuisance, are not at all. In the social floor of the Doughnut, the welfare of humans is central, not that of other animals. That is where we see room for improvement; room to include *all* animals in the indicators of the Doughnut and to emancipate them.

Can the Doughnut be more vegan?

The answer to this question is: definitely! Non-human animals are now mainly indirectly addressed in the ecological indicators, and it seems right to us to explicitly include them in the social indicators. One of the social indicators is the reduction of inequality; To us this one stood out the most. Here lies an opportunity to counteract speciesism, the discrimination on the basis of species by people. By recognizing and acknowledging other animals as individuals, just like ourselves, and also including them in the social indicators of the Doughnut, we counteract this and work towards the emancipation of the other animals.

More social indicators can be applied to non-human animals. You can for example think of health, water, food, housing and peace. An interesting problem is to what extent people have a duty of care towards wild animals in such areas. Intervention in nature can help an individual animal, but work to the disadvantage of another animal or negatively affect the balance of the ecosystem. For animals that are kept, used and killed by humankind, these indicators are relatively easily applicable, and to a limited extent this is already done by current legislation.

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In closing, we would like to emphasize that Kate Raworth's intention with the Doughnut Economy is to promote democracy. Together we determine what the compass for the new economy will look like, and thus also the direction in which it points. The economists are not intended to (continue to) determine this. So there is room to shape the Doughnut together in the way we would like to see it, and the interests of all animals can be included.

In conclusion

The Doughnut Economy is an interesting and much-needed development, which takes people along to redesign the economy together from a planet-destroying machine to one that exists and thrives within the boundaries of the Earth and the well-being of its inhabitants. Vegans, in particular, can take up the vegan gauntlet to deploy this new economy and the Doughnut, or the compass that points us in the direction of this new economy, as well for the emancipation of non-human animals.

Does this Doughnut taste like more?

Then we have two suggestions. Indra was a guest a few times on the podcast Doughnut Talks, once in English. And, building on that discussion, he later wrote an article discussing limitations to and alternative ways to visualize the Doughnut. Listen and read it back here:

Doughnut Talks: <https://medium.com/doughnuttalks> (Chapter 7 - Be Agnostic About Growth)
An Hourglass to complement the Doughnut of Doughnut Economics: <https://lnkd.in/gJnUh38>

Sources used:

1. Blog: “Doing the Doughnut at the G20?” by Kate Raworth (2018). Available here: <https://www.kateraworth.com/2018/12/01/doing-the-doughnut-at-the-g20/>
2. Article: “Which countries are within the doughnut?” by Jeremy Williams on The Earthbound Report (2018). Available here: <https://earthbound.report/2018/02/13/which-countries-are-within-the-doughnut/>
3. Documentary: *#Powerplant* from the Nicolaas G. Pierson Foundation (2019). Fragments at 6:15 and 9:58 minutes. Available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElgdTJ6_D38

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