

Eat kangaroo to help combat climate change: Ross Garnaut

AUSTRALIANS should replace beef and lamb on the dinner table with kangaroo to fight climate change, Kevin Rudd's chief climate change adviser says.

Professor Ross Garnaut has suggested in his final report on climate change that the nation's farmers should switch to the low-emission meat.

He also suggests Australian families should give up beef and eat more kangaroo.

"Sheep and cattle production is highly vulnerable to the biophysical impacts of climate change, such as water scarcity," he says.

"Australian marsupials emit negligible amounts of methane from enteric fermentation. This could be a source of international comparative advantage for Australia in livestock production.

"For most of Australia's human history of around 60,000 years, kangaroo was the main source of meat. It could again become important."

Professor Garnaut notes there are some barriers to this change, including livestock and farm-management issues, consumer resistance and the gradual nature of change in food tastes.

Michael Mulligan, president of the Kangaroo Industry Association, told the Taste of Kangaroo symposium at Sydney's Parliament House earlier this week that the national symbol had become a "more and more accepted everyday meat".

Professor Garnaut notes that researchers have modeled the potential for kangaroos to replace sheep and cattle for meat production in Australia's rangelands, where kangaroos are already harvested.

"They conclude that by 2020, beef cattle and sheep numbers in the rangelands could be reduced by seven million and 36 million respectively, and that this would create the opportunity for an increase in kangaroo numbers from 34 million today to 240million by 2020," he says.

But matters may be complicated by the treatment of agriculture under the proposed emissions trading scheme. While Professor Garnaut has said agriculture should be included in an ETS as soon as possible, the Government's own Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme green paper says it will not be covered until at least 2015. ■


