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Let's Take Action

By Sia Shetkar

In the last 4.5 billion years, homo sapiens have only emerged 200 000 years ago. We've only been around for a fraction of a miniscule fraction of time, but we have made one of the biggest impacts to the Earth's health. Since we are the most intelligent species to date, we should have made a positive impact, but waste, pollution and many other factors make it clear this is not the case. Yet.

But what is the one thing that is at the root of it all?

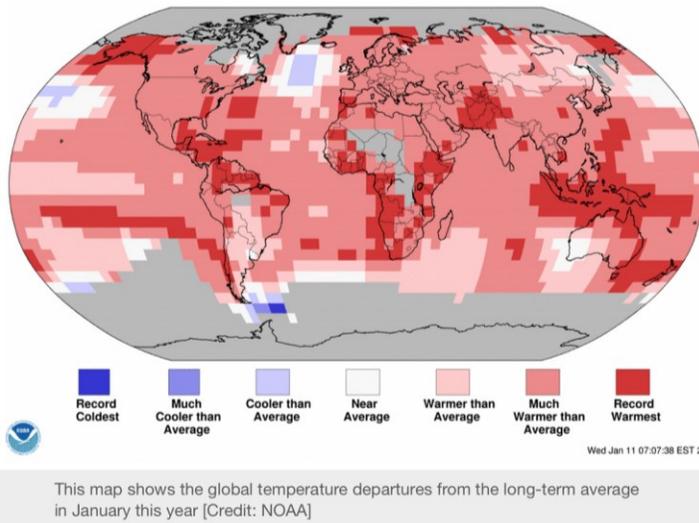
What are the individual problems and how can they be solved?

Humans want faster, cheaper ways to get things done. We want luxuries. Most people would not give up their phone for the planet's sake or stop taking long, hot showers. One day, there won't be any coal left to make our electricity - charge our devices and heat our water. It is estimated to be only 5 years till the UK runs out of all fossil fuels¹. There are many more ways to make electricity, including renewable wind, hydro, and solar-power. These options are more eco-friendly. The main reason there are so many more power plants using coal is the price. It is cheaper to burn coal. But when weighed against destroying the environment, the greener choices are far better.

The factories that are powered by coal emit large amounts of pollution and contaminate water and air. Byproducts can poison water that locals use and the carbon emission spurs global warming.

Climate change will cause excessive rain and floods in wetter places and throw hotter regions into severe drought. This leads to inflation because crops will get more difficult to grow. Temperatures will also rise significantly (as shown in source²).

'Extreme and unusual' climate trends continue after record 2016



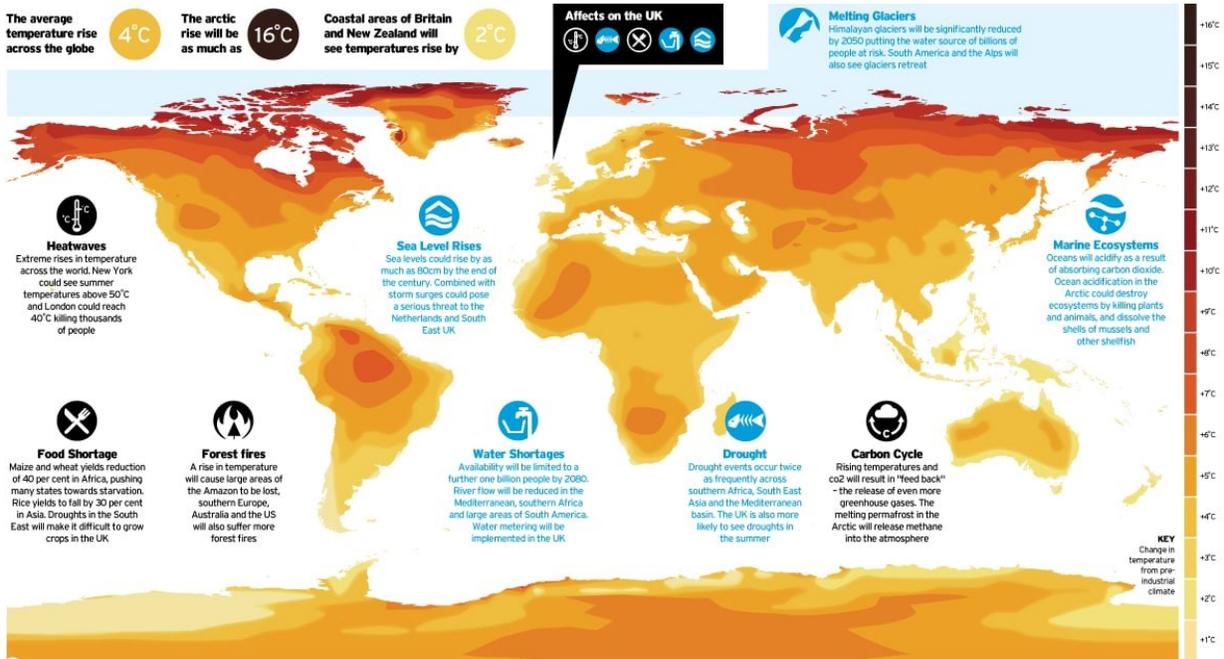
In the atmosphere, the seas and around the poles, climate change is reaching disturbing new levels across the Earth.

In the future, these greenhouse gases will eventually cause the polar ice caps to melt, raising sea levels. This will cause floods and drown islands and coastal areas in Scotland in the next few decades³.

Source² : Record breaking temperatures sweep the globe

Solar radiation will filter in because of the weakened magnetic field surrounding the Earth and can cause skin cancer or eye damage⁴. It can also provide good levels of Vitamin D and disinfect water in a cost-effective way⁴. Still, the health risks are dangerous.

CLIMATE DESTABILISATION



Source⁵ : Consequences of climate change

A good way to regulate the carbon footprint of factories, is to place fees. The organisation can either reduce their outtake, or pay the respective charges. New technology is expensive, though, and many companies are not willing to spend their money on them.

Waste is also a major issue. It is entirely possible, for almost all of us to live a life with zero garbage, but instead, a single person can produce several kilograms of trash daily.

There are several gigantic garbage islands in the ocean that can measure up to over 1 million kilometres squared⁶. Hourly, 1.6 million tonnes of waste are dumped in the ocean, which comes to an annual of 14 billion tonnes⁷. Majority of this is plastic, that can actually be recycled⁷. Of total waste in the UK, about 44% is recycled, which has room for improvement⁸.

Here are some ways to reduce your waste:

- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - They are simple and very effective.
- Do not litter. There are many recycling bins everywhere.
- Try buy products with packaging that has been recycled or is recyclable.
- Stop using plastic bags. They are one of the hardest things to get rid of. Keep and reuse old ones. Get bags that are especially meant for reuse. Cloth, woven and thick plastic bags are also more durable.
- Try not to waste food. As it is, grocery stores, restaurants and such, waste lots of food. When eating out, take the leftovers home to eat later.
- Look for ways to compost your waste. Approximately 80% of things in our dustbins can be recycled or composted⁹.
- If you feel you are capable, or interested, check out the YouTube channel, Trash is for Tossers¹⁰. Lauren Singer teaches you handy tips to reducing your waste production. She lives a zero waste lifestyle.

These aren't the only issues, but the major ones that will have huge impact on the planet.

The most dangerous?

Lack of action.

There are many successful movements that raise awareness, but personally, I think we need to take them more seriously. This isn't a few centuries. Numerous situations I have outlined are in the near future - decades. Our generation has to slow down, stop and maybe even reverse all these adverse effects on the environment.

Recently, campaigns like the Paris agreement target to slow down the rising climate by cutting down on greenhouse gases¹¹. Almost 200 countries have signed the agreement, but even then, scientists say more needs to be done¹¹.

Self-sustaining households, rationing of power and water and even immigration to another planet will happen. Sacrifices will have to be made. We have lots of options to save ourselves and our home.

Let's take action.

References

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