

## Media Advisory

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## New Free, Hands-On Tool Supports Sustainable Living Choices

### Nitrogen footprint calculator enables individuals to chart and reduce their contribution to growing problem of nitrogen pollution

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – People who want to eat healthy and live sustainably have a new way to measure their impact on the environment: a **web-based tool** that calculates an individual's "nitrogen footprint." The device was created by award-winning scientist James N. Galloway, his research colleague Allison Leach at the University of Virginia, and colleagues from The Netherlands and the University of Maryland. The project was launched today at the AAAS Annual Meeting in Washington.

What's the big deal about nitrogen? Though residents of the Chesapeake Bay and Gulf of Mexico are likely familiar with it, it's unknown to most Americans outside the agricultural world. Galloway and other leading scientists have been noting fish kills in coastal areas, threats to human health as a result of air and water pollution, and changes to global biodiversity and climate for the last 30 years.

"Nitrogen, as any farmer knows, is essential to plant life," said James Galloway, the Associate Dean for the Sciences in the College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Virginia and the Sidman P. Poole Professor in the Department of Environmental Sciences. "But the widespread use of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer to boost crop production has resulted in excess nitrogen coming off farms – essentially adding unwanted, unneeded fertilizer to our natural systems with disastrous results. The combustion of fossil fuels adds even more nitrogen to our environment."

To raise awareness, Galloway organized a global team of experts to develop the footprint calculator as an educational tool – one he and his colleagues hope will both raise the profile of the nitrogen issue and galvanize people into action. By measuring what and how much you eat, as well as other factors like how you travel, the calculator shows your impact on the nitrogen cycle.

The website also makes recommendations for how to lessen your "nitrogen footprint." They are similar to other sustainable living choices: reduce airplane travel, choose renewable energy, and eat less meat, particularly beef. Professors and lecturers are already using the tool in classrooms to teach students how one individual can alter –and help restore–a natural cycle like nitrogen.

The calculator is a project of the International Nitrogen Initiative, a global network of scientists who share research and data on the nitrogen dilemma. It is supported by the Agouron Institute, the US Environmental Protection Agency, the University of Virginia, and the Energy Research Center of the Netherlands.

For more information, visit <http://www.n-print.org>

**CONTACT**

**James N. Galloway**  
Associate Dean for the Sciences,  
University of Virginia  
[jng@eservices.virginia.edu](mailto:jng@eservices.virginia.edu)  
(434) 924-3437

**Allison Leach**  
Research Associate  
University of Virginia  
[aml4x@virginia.edu](mailto:aml4x@virginia.edu)  
(434) 924-1303