Fish and chips to curry: UK's favourite dishes at risk from climate change, research shows

Earth Hour campaign aims to raise awareness of the impact global warming could have on food supplies, from cod stocks to the rice and tomatoes used to make chicken tikka masala

Rebecca Smithers Consumer affairs correspondent / Tue 20 Mar 2018

Some of the UK’s best- loved dishes – including fish and chips and chicken tikka masala – could be under threat as a result of climate change, environmentalists warn in a new report on Tuesday.

Warmer seas could see populations of cod – long the staple in fish and chips – replaced by lesser-known substitutes, leading to an “anchovies and chips” fish supper as soon as 2050, the environmental charity WWF said.

Research commissioned for Earth Hour, the world’s largest event to protect the planet, found that these and other favourites including the cheese ploughman’s platter and lamb cawl (Welsh lamb stew) may taste different and cost more in the future. Crucially, climate change could threaten the supply of the key ingredients in these dishes, leading to substitutes.

Britons could find themselves dining out on algae-fed chicken tikka masala, if chickens need to be fed on alternatives to soy if production is hit by higher temperatures and
changes to rainfall. Other key ingredients of a tikka masala, such as rice, tomatoes and onions could all suffer price hikes and shortages as a result of fluctuating weather.

To mark Earth Hour, which starts at 8.30pm on Saturday 24 March, WWF is urging people to make promises to change their life in one small way to help the environment, such as refusing plastic cutlery, carrying a refillable cup or cutting back on meat.

“The threat to these classic dishes just shows that climate change could impact every aspect of our lives in future if we don’t act now,” said Gareth Redmond-King, head of energy and climate at WWF. “That’s why we want people to eat more sustainably. That doesn’t necessarily mean going vegan or vegetarian – it means each of us cutting back on the amount of fish, meat and dairy. If each of us takes a small action, together we can combat climate change and future-proof our best-loved dishes.”

Backling the scheme is One Planet Plate – a campaign by the Sustainable Restaurant Association to put sustainability on the menu and a chance for chefs worldwide to demonstrate to diners how they are sourcing and cooking sustainably. Diners can use a dynamic map to find restaurants – from Eurostar to Wahaca – serving a One Planet Plate.