

The Benefits of Veg

<http://www.farmusa.org/issues.htm>

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Introduction

The biggest problems confronting America and the rest of our planet are disease, hunger, environmental devastation, and death. Every one of these traces its roots more or less directly to animal agriculture. Although most people are motivated by health concerns, it is important to realize that dietary choices have much broader implications for planetary survival.

Heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and other chronic diseases kill 1.4 million

Americans annually. Food poisoning sickens millions and kills thousands. A dozen panels of experts have associated the majority of food poisoning cases with the consumption of animal products. Food poisoning comes primarily from *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and other bacterial and viral pathogens that thrive in meat, egg, and dairy products. Improper handling and cooking exposes these deadly pathogens to humans.

Hunger afflicts more than a billion people worldwide and starvation and hunger-related diseases kill 24,000 per day, mostly children. That translates into *1 death every 2.5 seconds* due to starvation. A major factor in world hunger is the waste of foodstuffs fed to animals raised for food, rather than to starving people. This was first documented in Frances Moore Lappe's 1972 classic *Diet for a Small Planet* and was reaffirmed at the 2002 World Food Summit in Rome. For more information on the connections between hunger and animal agriculture, visit [Well-Fed World](#).

Most wars are fought over control of natural resources: land, water, oil, and minerals. Yet, animal agriculture is by far the largest user and despoiler of natural resources. In addition, animal agriculture directly kills annually approximately 55 billion animals worldwide, after subjecting them to the cruelties of factory farming. It also kills uncounted numbers of wildlife on land and in the seas as “byproducts” of a wasteful and inefficient system.

Yet, these issues are not discussed in our nation's schools or universities, and they are barely discussed by national decision-makers. Nutrition education has been largely relinquished to the very meat and dairy industries that create these problems, and we are left to consume the harmful products of these industries. The responsibility for this tragedy must be shared by individuals, Congress, USDA, and, of course, the very powerful meat, egg, and dairy industries.

Diet and Health

Consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes (beans, peas, and lentils) is crucial to good health. These foods supply essential nutrients, fiber, antioxidants, and a variety of beneficial phytonutrients, which reduce the risk of heart disease, certain types of cancer, diabetes, stroke, osteoporosis, and other chronic diseases. Plant-based foods contain little saturated fat and are generally lower in levels of pesticides, pathogens, and heavy metals. Plant foods never contain cholesterol, hormones, and antibiotics. There is evidence that children and adults who consume wholesome plant-based meals enjoy more energy and improved intellectual performance.

Conversely, meat and dairy products come laden with saturated fats, cholesterol, hormones, pathogens, and antibiotics. They lack complex carbohydrates (including fiber) and many vitamins and minerals. These are all essential to good health.

Protein

Protein provides the body with essential amino acids and assists in the manufacture of tissue cells, antibodies, and enzymes. It also helps maintain the proper acid-base balance (pH), immune protection, and transmission of nerve impulses.

Protein is found in many plant foods, particularly legumes, grains, seeds, nuts, and vegetables. In the US, common legumes are soybeans (including tofu and soymilk), garbanzo beans, kidney beans, black beans, pinto beans, peas, and lentils. Common grains are rice, wheat, and corn. Legumes and grains are also good sources of complex carbohydrates, and plant products are the only source of fiber.

The meat industry has raised some alarm by suggesting that protein from plant sources may not be as 'complete' as that from animal sources. Fortunately, essential amino acids that may be low or missing in grains are available in legumes or vegetables and vice versa. Our liver stores and redistributes the essential amino acids when they are needed. This is precisely how the animals raised for food get their 'complete' proteins.

Many people are unnecessarily concerned about 'getting enough' protein. This concern is misplaced as most Americans consume an excessive amount of protein. This has two significant drawbacks: byproducts of proteins for excretion stress the kidneys unnecessarily; also, extra protein translates into extra calories that will be stored as body fat. The average protein RDA (recommended daily allowance) for an adult male is 63 grams and 50 grams for an adult female; but the average consumption for an Americans is 103 grams, of which 70 grams comes from animal sources.

Fats

Some fats are essential to good health, whereas others contribute to obesity, heart disease, and certain types of cancer. The official government recommendation from the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* is that no more than 30% of our daily calories should be derived from fat and, specifically, no more than 10% from saturated fat. Other health experts such as the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend even lower limits.

The four key types of fats are:

1. Monounsaturated
2. Polyunsaturated
3. Saturated
4. Hydrogenated (*trans* fats)

Monounsaturated fats are the healthiest fats and are found in olives, peanuts, almonds, avocados, and sunflower seeds – as well as the oils made from each of these foods – and canola oil. Clinical research shows that monounsaturated fats reduce blood levels of LDL (low-density lipoproteins or 'bad' cholesterol) and increase levels of HDL (high-density lipoproteins or 'good' cholesterol). Overall, they have the best positive lowering effects on blood cholesterol levels.

Polyunsaturated fats are a good, necessary choice and are found in corn and walnuts, and soybean, safflower, sunflower, grapeseed, and flaxseed oils. Polyunsaturated fatty acids lower total blood cholesterol levels by lowering the 'bad' cholesterol. Polyunsaturated fatty acids include the essential omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids which are essential for many important body functions. They are an essential part of the diet because the body cannot produce them. Omega-3 fatty acids have also been shown to protect against heart disease. The media portrays fish as 'healthy food' because of their omega-3 fatty acids; but the heart-healthy fats are available in plant products as well, with the added benefits of also containing fiber and an important plant phytonutrient called lignins.

Saturated fats are less healthy fats that are found primarily in meat and dairy products, but also a few plant foods like avocados, coconuts and palm oils, and vegetable shortening as a result of food processing. The body stores excess proteins and carbohydrates as saturated fats. The liver uses saturated fats to manufacture the body's natural supply of cholesterol. Excessive dietary intake of saturated fats raises the blood cholesterol level by increasing the 'bad' cholesterol. Additionally, saturated fats place increased stress on the liver.

Hydrogenated fats, also known as *trans* fats, are unquestionably bad fats. *Trans* fats are polyunsaturated fats that have been processed from a liquid (such as corn oil) into a solid form (such as margarine or shortening). *Trans* fats are present in most prepackaged prepared foods, frozen foods, dry mixes, many snack foods, breakfast cereals, crackers, cookies, donuts, chips, etc. These fats elevate 'bad' cholesterol and lower 'good' cholesterol. Moreover, the hydrogenation process causes molecular damage that has been linked to elevated cancer risk. Many health experts consider *trans* fats to be even worse for you than saturated fats – which are bad enough!

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the main source of blood glucose, which fuels the body's cells, and is the only source of energy for the brain and red blood cells. The U.S. government generally recommends that 60% of total daily calories come from carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are found almost exclusively in plant foods such as fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes.

Complex carbohydrates, found only in plant products such as vegetables, legumes, and grains, provide a sustained source of long chains of glucose, sometimes hundreds or thousands of glucose molecules long. The dietary fiber in complex carbohydrates cleans the digestive tract and ties up cholesterol-producing compounds, reducing blood cholesterol levels and therefore helping to reduce the risk of colon cancer and cardiovascular diseases.

Simple carbohydrates, which are essentially fruit sugars (hence the name 'fructose'), are converted into usable glucose more rapidly than complex carbohydrates. Refined grains and sugars, contained in most processed foods and soft drinks, produce spikes in the blood glucose level, requiring excessive release of insulin -- a possible precursor to hypoglycemia and diabetes.

Vitamins and Minerals

Plant foods contain all the vitamins (except for B12) and minerals essential for good health. Many people erroneously believe that animal products contain vitamins and minerals that one cannot get from plant products. In particular, the minerals calcium, iron, and zinc come into question. However, this is a complete myth! For example, iron is particularly plentiful in legumes, green vegetables, and dried fruit. Its absorption rate improves in the presence of vitamin C, which is available in all fruits. Zinc is available in legumes, corn, nuts, and seeds. And if calcium only comes from milk, how do cows – who only eat grass and hay – produce so much calcium-rich milk? The answer is in the plant products they eat.

Though dairy products are widely touted as a source of calcium, they can actually

contribute to osteoporosis. The calcium in dairy products comes with the high price of saturated fats and often high levels of hormones and antibiotics. Moreover, the excessive protein content of dairy products leaches calcium from human bones. Human milk is designed for infants, just as a cow's milk is designed for her calf. They are not exchangeable; nature made a distinction here. There is no need for adults to consume the milk of cows, goats, or any other animal. Indeed, most adults worldwide are lactose intolerant (unable to digest the milk sugar, lactose). Therefore, lactose intolerance is, essentially, a *natural* "disorder" which occurs when our bodies lose the ability to break down lactose. This slowing down occurs naturally when a child is weaned from his/her mother. It is only from continually consuming milk products do we force our bodies into an unnatural state of producing the enzyme that breaks down lactose. Though not everyone's body can maintain this. Green leafy vegetables, such as collard greens, mustard greens, and kale, as well as calcium-fortified orange juice and calcium-fortified soy, rice, and almond milks provide ample calcium.

Diet and Disease

Children

Across the country, meals are dominated by animal products and are laden with saturated fat, cholesterol, excess protein, hormones, drugs, and salt. These are diets that defy the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and promote bacterial infections, diabetes, several forms of cancer, and other chronic diseases that cripple and kill nearly 1.4 million Americans annually. These diets are particularly damaging for children who are still growing and whose early dietary habits become lifelong addictions.

Consider the following:

- School lunches contain 33% of calories from fat, including 12% from saturated fat, while U.S. *Dietary Guidelines* recommend 30% and 10%, respectively.
- 90% of children consume amounts of fat above the recommended level.
- Less than 15% of children eat the minimum daily recommended servings of fruit, and 35% eat no fruit on a given day.
- Only 17% of children consume the minimum daily recommended servings of vegetables, and 20% eat no vegetables on a given day.
- 15% of children ages 6 to 19 are overweight, and the Surgeon General has reported that obesity is reaching epidemic proportions, particularly among children.
- 25% of children ages 5 to 10 have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or other early warning signs for heart disease.
- As many as 30,000 children have Type II diabetes, once limited largely to adults.
- The past decade has had 300 outbreaks of school food poisoning affecting 16,000 students.
- For more information on children and the negative consequences of animal products, visit [CHOICE School Lunch Campaign](#).

Vascular Diseases

Vascular diseases, including heart diseases and stroke, are caused by blockage of the

arteries that supply oxygenated blood to the body's vital organs. The blockages are caused by a build-up of fatty plaque along the artery walls. This condition is called atherosclerosis. Total blockage of an artery leading to a portion of the heart or the brain brings on a heart attack or stroke. Nearly 860,000 Americans die each year of vascular diseases.

Diets laden with saturated fat, cholesterol, and salt are the key factors in the incidence of cardiovascular diseases. Cholesterol is the key component of the fatty plaques. Saturated fats raise blood cholesterol level more than any other factor. Salt consumption promotes water retention and blood volume, leading to hypertension, which contributes to the incidence of heart disease and stroke, as well as to rupture of blood vessels.

All animal foods contain cholesterol, but no plant foods do. In fact, antioxidants and folic acid in plant foods protect arteries from plaque formation. Plant foods are also naturally low in saturated fats and salt, and the potassium in plant foods reduces hypertension. Additionally, fiber, which is found exclusively in plant products, has been shown to decrease blood cholesterol.

Cancer

Cancer is actually a variety of diseases that occur when the cells grow out of control, spread through the body, and interfere with the function of a vital organ. Cancers of the lung, breast, prostate, and the digestive tract have all been linked with a diet high in animal foods. Nearly 260,000 Americans die of these types of cancer each year.

Consumption of animal fats raises blood testosterone and estrogen levels that promote prostate and breast cancers, respectively. Carcinogenic pesticides spread on animal feedcrops accumulate in animals' fatty tissues. In the digestive tract, animal fats interact with bile acids to release carcinogens. All animal fats heated to high temperatures, as in deep-fried foods, also form carcinogens. Nitrites in hot dogs and other 'cured' meat products are known carcinogens. The Insulin Growth Factor (IGF) in dairy products promotes malignant cell growth.

Conversely, plant foods contain fiber, which helps prevent cancer of the digestive tract by speeding food transit before formation of the carcinogens and reduces the risk of breast cancer, perhaps by lowering estrogen level. Plants also contain antioxidants and flavones that impede formation of cancer cells.

Diabetes

Animal fat in the bloodstream blocks insulin from playing its vital role. The cells of our body feed on glucose that is escorted by insulin. This causes adult-onset or Type II diabetes. The incidence of this disease has been growing among both adults and children because of their faulty diet. In some children, cow's milk generates antibodies that destroy the pancreatic cells that produce insulin, leading to Type I diabetes. Diabetes is a serious disease, which causes shortness of breath, vomiting, dehydration, and eventually contributes to heart and kidney diseases. Diabetes kills nearly 70,000 Americans each year.

Other Chronic Conditions

Kidney stones and other kidney diseases are typically associated with excessive

consumption of meat, dairy, and other proteins that these organs convert into fat and waste products. Kidney diseases kill nearly 40,000 Americans each year.

Dairy products are responsible for a number of serious digestive and allergic reactions. Nearly 50 million Americans, including 75% of African Americans and 90% of Asian Americans suffer from severe cramps caused by lactose intolerance. Common allergic reactions include asthma, skin rashes, and ear infections.

Infectious Diseases

Pathogens that thrive in animal foods are among the primary causes of food poisoning. The biggest culprits are Escherichia coli, Salmonella enteritidis, Campylobacter jejuni, and Listeria monocytogenes. These diseases cause several days of misery and occasional deaths. The Centers for Disease Control estimate that 9 million cases occur annually, though most are not reported.

All meat and poultry products are required to carry warning labels because the USDA has been unable to vouch for their safety. In 2002, following repeated incidents of school food poisoning, the Department decided to irradiate meat destined for the school lunch program. Meat products also contain antibiotic residues, which build up resistance in pathogens, and render antibiotics less effective in treating infectious diseases.

Diet and World Hunger

Worldwide, nearly a billion people suffer from chronic hunger. 24,000 people per day or 8.8 million per year die from hunger or related causes. Three-fourths are children under five. Chronic hunger causes stunted growth, poor vision, listlessness, and susceptibility to disease.

Global malnutrition is largely the consequence of inequitable distribution and waste of food resources. Only 10% of hunger deaths are attributed to catastrophic events like famine or war. Hunger is a complex problem, but huge amounts of waste occur because of non-sustainable practices related to animal agriculture, such as depletion of cultivable land, topsoil, water, energy, and minerals, and the extremely inefficient process of converting plants-based foods into animal-based foods. More information is available at [Well-Fed World](#).

Role of Animal Agriculture

A meat-based diet requires 10-20 times as much land as a plant-based diet. Nearly half of the world's grains and soybeans are fed to animals, resulting in a huge waste of food calories. The extent of waste is such that even a 10% drop in US meat consumption would make sufficient food available to feed the world's starving millions.

Moreover, animal agriculture has been devastating the world's agricultural land. The process begins with clear-cutting of forests to create cattle pastures. Eventually, the pastures are plowed under and used to grow animal feedcrops. Depletion of topsoil and minerals begins soon after the trees are cut down and escalates with tilling. Without the

plant growth to hold it in place, topsoil, laden with minerals, fertilizer, and organic debris, is carried by the runoff of rain and melting snow into nearby streams. The insatiable demand for animal feedcrops leads to the use of sloping land with greater runoff and arid land requiring irrigation. Irrigation accounts for more than 80% of all water available for human use, leading to widespread water shortages.

Future Outlook

Western agribusiness interests, faced with saturated markets and increasingly stringent environmental regulations at home, seek to export factory farming practices and to expand the demand for their products in developing countries.

This expansion of the meat industry brings a number of disastrous consequences. It would exacerbate the mal-distribution and waste of food resources. The resulting drawdown of grain supplies would precipitate major famines. The public health impacts would impose an intolerable economic burden. The impacts on soil, water, and wildlife would threaten fragile ecosystems.

The sustainable cultivation of plant foods favored by developing countries offers a safe, nutritious, and affordable solution to hunger and malnutrition. Fruits, vegetables, grains and legumes can be grown in most climates and on small plots of land. Such crops require minimal investment in equipment, fertilizers, pesticides, water, and energy, and they cause negligible soil degradation and water pollution.

Diet and the Environment

According to the 2006 report published by the [United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization](#), the livestock sector generates more greenhouse gas emissions as measured in CO2 equivalent--18%--than transport! Find out more at [Bite Global Warming](#).

Animal agriculture is more devastating to our natural environment than all other human activities combined. This devastation impacts land, water, air, and wildlife.

Land

Animal agriculture has been turning lush forests and prairies into barren deserts since the dawn of human history. The process begins with clear-cutting of forests to create pastures for cattle and other ruminants. This is a major loss, because trees provide wildlife habitats, keep topsoil in place, replenish groundwater aquifers, absorb carbon dioxide, and stabilize climate.

As the pastures become overgrazed, they are plowed under and turned into animal feed croplands. With little or no plant growth to hold it in place, topsoil is carried by rain and melting snow into streams and lakes, and its productive capacity is lost forever. This process is accelerated by the use of marginal sloping lands to meet the insatiable demand for animal feed.

Water

The rain and melting snow that runs off animal feed croplands and factory farms dumps more pollution into our lakes, streams, and estuaries than all other human activities combined.

The cropland runoff contains soil particles, salts, organic debris, fertilizer, and pesticides. Soil particles smother fish eggs and bottom dwelling organisms and block stream flow. Salts, primarily sodium and potassium chloride, raise the salinity of the water, rendering it unsuitable for certain organisms. Organic debris feeds microorganisms that deplete the water's oxygen supply and kill the fish. Fertilizers spur algal blooms that smother or actually attack aquatic organisms. Pesticides kill all living organisms.

Animals raised for food in the US produce 130 times the amount of waste that people do. This waste, containing pathogens and hormones, is stored in huge open cesspools, euphemistically called 'lagoons.' Eventually, this waste winds up in the nearest waterway, killing aquatic organisms directly or through formation of algal blooms. Waste from mid-Atlantic pig and poultry factory farms has destroyed fisheries along the Eastern seaboard and the Gulf of Mexico. Some of the waste leaks into the ground, poisoning vital groundwater supplies.

Animal agriculture's insatiable demand for land presses into service arid lands that require irrigation. Irrigation now accounts for more than 80% of all water available for use in the US and leads to critical water shortages, particularly in the Western states.

Oceans

Commercial fishing, aquaculture, and angling are environmentally catastrophic. Commercial fishing is wiping out biodiversity, as miles of nets sweep up all the fish in their path—and take coral habitats with them. Commercial fishers have devastated the ocean's ecosystem to the extent that large fish populations are only 10 percent of what they were in the 1950s.

Commercial fishing boats leave their ports in pursuit of specific species of fish, but their hooks and nets bring up thousands of pounds of other marine animals as well. Sharks, sea turtles, birds, seals, whales, and other nontarget fish who get tangled in nets and hooked by long-lines are termed "bycatch" and are thrown overboard. They fall victim to swarming birds or slowly bleed to death in the water. Scientists recently found that nearly 1,000 marine mammals—dolphins, whales, and porpoises—die each day after they are caught in fishing nets. By some estimates, shrimp trawlers discard as much as 85 percent of their catch, making shrimp arguably the most environmentally destructive fish flesh a person can consume.

Air

Wind erosion from animal croplands is the largest source of airborne particles, which irritate respiratory passages and make them more susceptible to respiratory infections. Factory farms produce a stench that poses a major nuisance (and possibly hazard) to neighbors for miles around. Methane emitted by cattle and carbon dioxide generated by the power plants that operate factory farms are major contributors to global warming.

Diet and Animals

Each year, ten billion chickens, cows, pigs, sheep, and other innocent, sentient animals are forced to live in filthy windowless sheds, wire cages, gestation crates, veal crates, and other confinement systems in U.S. factory farms and are deprived, drugged, and manhandled. They are then hauled to the slaughterhouse and slaughtered under atrocious conditions. Ten percent never make it to the slaughterhouse, dying from stress-induced diseases or injuries.

Cows & Calves

Beef cattle are typically enclosed in feedlots, which pack tens of thousands of animals per unit. Cows have no protection from rain or snow, freezing wind, or searing heat. They are castrated, dehorned, and branded with no anesthesia or surgical training.

Many **dairy cows** are now raised in large, mechanized dairies or "dry-lot" dairies, where they have little or no access to pasture. In one type of system, cows are confined to cramped stalls and are usually chained by the neck; in another type of operation, they are crowded into outdoor enclosures where they must continuously stand and lie on feces and urine-caked soil. Dairy cows are artificially inseminated and kept perpetually pregnant in order to ensure a constant supply of milk. Many cows are injected with bovine growth hormone to boost milk production to unnaturally high levels, causing infectious udder diseases and additional stress to the animals.

When the cows' babies are born, they are removed from their mothers almost immediately so humans can drink the milk nature intended for calves. Most of the male calves are auctioned off for beef and slaughtered when they are only one and half years old; others are sold to veal producers, where they are kept chained by the neck in tiny, filthy wood crates to keep their flesh soft and fed a liquid diet to keep their flesh pale. These conditions breed diarrhea, respiratory disease, and anemia. The calves are deprived of natural food, fresh air, and their mothers' love. After 16 weeks, they are dragged to slaughter and served as veal. Some of the calves who aren't raised for beef or traditional veal are killed days after they are born and used in TV dinners and for inexpensive veal products. The premature separation of the cow from her babies causes suffering for both mother and offspring. Many cows search and bellow for their calves for days after they're removed.

Female calves are also denied their mothers' affection. Because a dairy cow's milk is produced to be sold for human consumption, every drop suckled by her calves represents lost profits to factory farm corporations. For this reason, female calves, too, are separated from their mothers at an early age. Instead of being weaned on their their mothers' milk, they may be weaned on a "milk replacer" comprised of beef fat or cattle blood, putting them at risk for Mad Cow disease. Once the females reach maturity, they will be impregnated and replace their mothers on the milk line.

Pigs

Breeding sows suffer a similar fate. They are kept constantly impregnated in tiny metal "gestation crates," which allow no room for the sows to walk or turn around. When they are ready to give birth, they are placed in "farrowing crates," nearly as cramped as gestation crates, where they give birth and nurse their litter of 10-12 piglets. The natural nursing period of 12 weeks is cut to 2-4 weeks, so that the sows can be impregnated again. After 3-

4 years, their exhausted bodies are sold for slaughter.

Over 20 percent of the prematurely weaned piglets die of stress and disease. They are the lucky ones. Those who survive are tagged and castrated without anesthesia, then placed in stacked wire cages euphemistically called 'nurseries.' Instead of mother's milk, they are fed a synthetic formula. When the pigs are able to eat solid food, they are transferred to large, crowded pens. Here they are fed for six months until slaughter.

Chickens and Turkeys

300 million turkeys and 9 billion chickens are slaughtered for human consumption each year in the US. These birds represent over 95% of all land animals slaughtered for food. They are crowded into large, dimly lit sheds that hold as many as 30,000 birds. Each bird gets less than a square foot of space. Because they are bred to gain weight quickly, many birds are crippled by their own weight and unable to walk. They are then unable to get to food and water or to defend themselves from the other birds who trample them on the way to the feeding station. Over time, the building fills with the poisonous stench of hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, and methane. After seven weeks, the animals are crammed into plastic cages for transport to slaughter. The chicken industry is aware that a certain percentage of the birds will die prematurely, but they accept this because extreme crowding and quick weight gain increase overall production and boost profits.

Chickens bred for egg production suffer a different fate. The male chicks are useless to the egg industry, so they are dumped into plastic bags, left to suffocate slowly, and ground up for chicken or other animal feed. The females have the tips of their beaks seared off with a hot iron to prevent stress-induced cannibalism. Research indicates that chicks suffer chronic pain for five to six weeks after beak searing. They are crammed 5-7 birds into 20x24" 'battery cages,' stacked on top of one another. The chickens are packed so tightly in these cages that they cannot fully extend their wings. In addition, they must stand on a sloping wire mesh floor, which causes foot and leg problems, while the wire mesh rubs away their feathers and bruises their skin. When the birds are about fifteen months old, their egg production declines, so they are "force-molted"—kept in low lighting and fed a low-calorie diet for seven to 14 days, which stresses their systems, resulting in increased egg production for about six more months. Afterwards, the birds are sent to slaughter.

Fish

Fish farming, or "aquaculture," has become a billion-dollar industry, and more than 30 percent of all the sea animals consumed each year are now raised on these "farms." Fish on aquafarms spend their entire lives in cramped, filthy enclosures, and many suffer from parasitic infections, diseases, and debilitating injuries. Conditions on some farms are so horrendous that 40 percent of the fish may die before farmers can kill and package them for food. In short, fish farms bring suffering and ecological devastation everywhere they go.

Today's commercial fishers use massive ships the size of football fields and advanced electronic equipment and satellite communications to track fish. These enormous vessels can stay out at sea for as long as six months, storing thousands of tons of fish onboard in massive freezer compartments. Commercial fishers kill hundreds of billions of animals every year—far more than any other industry—and they've decimated our ocean ecosystems. In fact, 90 percent of large fish populations have been exterminated in the past

50 years.

Transport and Slaughter

Animals are hauled to slaughter for many hours without food, water, or rest, while exposed to extreme temperatures. Many die in transit, and those too sick or injured to walk are dragged with chains to the kill floor.

Consumers have no clue about the cruelty they subsidize. At the slaughterhouse, some of the animals are skinned, dismembered, or drowned in scalding water while still conscious. They are then cut into smaller pieces, wrapped in cellophane, and presented at the supermarket counter.

Fish slaughter plants in the U.S. make no effort to stun fish, who are fully conscious when they start down the slaughter line. Their gills are cut, and they are left to bleed to death, convulsing in pain. Large fish, such as salmon, are sometimes bashed on the head with a wooden bat called a “priest,” and many are seriously injured but still alive and suffering when they are cut open. Smaller fish, like trout, are often killed by simply draining water away and leaving them to slowly suffocate or by packing them in ice while they are still fully conscious. Because fish are cold-blooded, allowing them to suffocate on ice prolongs their suffering, leaving them to experience excruciating pain for as long as 15 minutes before they die.

Wildlife

In addition to the ten billion animals killed by animal agriculture each year for human consumption, hundreds of thousands of prairie dogs, coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, bears, bison, and other wild animals are shot, maimed, poisoned, and burned alive by farmers and government agents to keep them from interfering with agricultural operations. Tens of millions of starlings and blackbirds are poisoned each year to keep them from eating animal feed.

An even greater threat to wildlife is posed by the destruction of their habitats. Animal agriculture turns hundreds of acres of forest, wetlands, and other habitats into grazing and croplands to feed farm animals.

Compassionate Clothing

If you don't eat animals and/or animal products anymore, congratulations! You have taken a vital step toward making this world a more compassionate place.

However, you may still wear animals and not even give it a second thought. Animal-based clothing, such as fur-trimmed jackets, wool coats, puffy down-filled jackets, leather shoes, wool or angora sweaters, and silk blouses are more than just incidental by-products; animal exploiters reap additional profits from sales of items such as leather and down, which in turn causes more animals to be raised and killed. Fortunately, an array of modern, attractive, non-animal based alternatives to almost every product imaginable, from shoes to baseball gloves, is now available. We no longer live in the Stone Age, so we should stop

dressing like we do!

To learn the ugly truth about fur, leather, and wool production and for alternatives, please go to: <http://www.peta.org/actioncenter/clothing.asp>

To find out why down is out and silk is better left to its original owner, visit: http://www.peta.org/mc/factsheet_display.asp?ID=121

Also, according to the New York Times, vegan clothing is now trendy!
[Uncruel Beauty](#)

Having trouble finding warm non-wool sweaters for those cold days?
[Vegan Sweaters: Trendy and Sheep Friendly](#)

In addition to the product guides advertised on the PETA website, below are some well-known companies that sell alternatives to wool and down-filled coats and wool suits. However, they also sell animal-based items, so check the product descriptions to determine the fabric content.

Patagonia: In addition to using non-animal fabrics, such as “synchilla,” some of their clothing is made from recycled fabrics. www.patagonia.com

REI: Sells a wide range of rugged, functional men’s and women’s coats and a variety of outerwear. www.rei.com

Brooks Brothers. This upscale clothing company offers suits made from “Poplin,” a combination of polyester and cotton, available for their Spring/Summer line beginning in February/March. <http://www.brooksbrothers.com>

100% Vegan Retailers:

Pangea: Includes cruelty-free cosmetics, shoes, jackets, belts, and other clothing, candles, vitamins, snacks, DVDs and books, and even companion-animal food.
www.veganstore.com

Vegan Essentials: Includes cruelty-free cosmetics, shoes, jackets, belts, and other clothing, candles, vitamins, snacks, DVDs and books, and even companion-animal food.
www.veganessentials.com

The Vegetarian Site: Includes a variety of products, recipes, and nutrition information.
<http://www.vegetariansite.com>

VegSource.com: Offers “friendly support, 25 hours a day, eight days a week, for your healthy vegetarian lifestyle.” <http://www.vegsource.com>

Conclusion & Internet Resources

Every day, we make dietary choices that directly affect our health, the health/hunger of others, the environment, and of course animal suffering. Individually and combined these issues are overwhelming, but changing our food choices to wholesome and compassionate plant-based foods is the best way to help ourselves while helping others.

GENERAL

[Veganism in a Nutshell](#)

[Common Vegan Foods](#)

[30 Day Menu](#)

[Healthy Fast Foods for Pre-Schoolers](#)

[Feeding Vegan Kids](#)

[Position of The American Dietetic Association](#)

[Vegetarian Athletes](#)

[Famous Vegetarians](#)

[Vegetarian Starter Kits](#)

[Vegetarian Starter Kit for Restaurants](#)

RECIPES

[Best of the Net Recipes](#)

[Recipes from Around The World](#)

[Recipes from Vegetarian Resource Group](#)

[Healthy Recipes: The Physicians Committee](#)

NUTRITION & HEALTH

[Vegetarianism: A Few Facts](#)

[FAQ's about Vegetarian Diets](#)

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