

13 Reasons to #BoycottBigMeat and Build a Better Food & Farming System



1 | Protect your health.

Better meat—organic, 100% grass-fed or pasture-raised—means better health. Studies show that meat from industrially farmed animals can have lower levels of beneficial omega-3 and a less favorable ratio of omega-6 to omega-3. By contrast, grass-fed and pasture-raised meats have more antioxidants, less cholesterol and lower risk of exposure to antibiotics, growth hormones and pesticides. Industrially produced meat is often contaminated—a 2017 Consumer Reports investigation revealed the widespread presence of hormones and illegal drugs in the U.S. industrial meat supply.

2 | Protect meat industry workers.

Workers in the industrial meat industry need the type of support proposed under the Green New Deal which would provide a just transition to better jobs, better pay, and safer working conditions in a green, regenerative, and resilient economy. A 2019 report by Human Rights Watch found that workers in industrial slaughterhouses have some of the highest rates of work-related injury and illness in the U.S. Recently, thousands of workers in U.S. slaughterhouses tested positive, became sick from or died from COVID-19 after being forced to work in unsafe conditions.

3 | Protect local food security.

Communities with strong local and regional food systems, made up of local producers, processors, distributors, and local markets, are more resilient and food-secure. The empty meat counters consumers saw during the COVID-19 crisis weren't caused by a shortage in cows, pigs or chickens—they were caused by disruption in the industrial meat-processing industry. When COVID-19 outbreaks forced huge, unsanitary slaughterhouses to close, farmers couldn't get their animals to market. Local producers of grass-fed, pasture-raised meat stepped up to meet demand for local, sustainably produced meat. Greater consumer demand for sustainably produced local and organic meat will help spur investment in local food infrastructure.

4 | Protect family farmers.

Four huge corporations—Tyson, Smithfield, JBS, and Cargill—dominate today's industrial meat production. Control over the marketplace gives these companies the power to keep the prices they pay farmers low, while amassing huge profits for themselves. Big Meat companies spend billions lobbying for policies that support their destructive, abusive, and extractive operations, while putting family farmers at a competitive disadvantage in the marketplace. Buying meat from the Big 4 builds wealth for corporate CEOs and shareholders who have no concern for consumers, workers, animals, the environment, or your community. Buying from organic regenerative independent farmers will help them, and your local community, survive and thrive.

5 | Protect farm animals.

According to the ASPCA, 94% of Americans agree that animals raised for food deserve to live free from abuse and cruelty. Yet the majority of the nearly 10 billion land-based animals farmed for food each year in the U.S. are imprisoned in crowded stress-inducing conditions that make them more susceptible to disease and injury—conditions that don't align with consumers' stated values. When you buy from local producers whose animals are never shipped off to factory farms, you are aligning your buying habits with your animal welfare values.

6 | Protect rural economies.

Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs. Farmers markets and food cooperatives help ensure dollars remain and circulate within localities, creating more vibrant communities. When Big Meat companies move into communities to set up their Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), they demand tax breaks and local investments in infrastructure, but deliver low-paying jobs and diminishing property values for local residents.

7 | Protect your water supply.

Producers of organic grass-fed and pasture-raised meat don't use synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, and don't feed their animals antibiotics and growth hormones—so they aren't putting those pollutants into local waterways. Industrial meat producers do use those chemicals and drugs, and do discharge them into waterways. According to the Environmental Integrity Project, between 2016-2018, 75% of large U.S. meat processing plants that discharge their wastewater directly into streams and rivers violated their pollution control permits, with some dumping as much nitrogen pollution as small cities—and facing little or no enforcement. Big Meat was credited in 2017 with creating the largest-ever dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

8 | Protect air quality.

Factory farms emit over 200 gases, including hydrogen sulfide and ammonia which can cause serious health problems at certain levels, according to Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement. Studies show that people living near factory farms are more likely to experience respiratory problems, headaches, diarrhea, burning eyes, nausea, and more serious health problems from factory farm air pollution. The problem is so bad that the American Public Health Association has called for a moratorium on new factory farms citing health concerns among children, neighbors and workers.

9 | Protect soil health.

Research suggests that the healthier the soil microbiome, the healthier your gut microbiome—and immune system—will be. The Atlantic reports that just as we've destroyed vital microbes in the human gut through overuse of antibiotics and highly processed foods, we've also recklessly devastated soil microbiota, essential to plant health, through overuse of certain chemical fertilizers, fungicides, herbicides, pesticides, failure to add sufficient organic matter, and heavy tillage. These soil microorganisms, particularly bacteria and fungi, cycle nutrients and water to plants, to our crops, the source of our food, and ultimately our health. Industrial meat production drives the growing of millions of acres of soil-destroying GMO crops for animal feed. Local producers of organic grass-fed and pasture-raised meat actually help build healthy soil because they don't feed GMO crops, and don't use synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

10 | Protect against antibiotic resistance.

Organic and regenerative farmers and ranchers produce meat without the routine use of massive amounts of antibiotics. That's important because the overuse of antibiotics in the industrial meat industry has led to a global antibiotic resistance crisis—every 15 minutes, one person in the U.S. dies from an infection that antibiotics can no longer treat effectively. According to the CDC, 700,000 people die every year from antimicrobial resistance—and that number is projected to reach 10 million by 2050. Today, about 75% of all antibiotics are used in agriculture—not to treat humans. Total global consumption of antibiotics in animal food production is projected to grow by almost 70% between 2010 and 2030.

11 | Protect plant & wildlife biodiversity.

Regenerative agriculture, including livestock production, incorporates beneficial insects, birds, and improves soil carbon content, fertility, availability of nutrients and soil life, all while producing food for human consumption. Healthy ecosystems play a vital role in providing food and clean water, controlling infectious diseases, absorbing wastes, regulating climate and are the source of much of the cultural, spiritual and recreational inspiration needed to maintain mental and physical health. Industrial meat production takes animals off the land, where properly managed, they contribute to a healthy, biodiverse ecosystem. Industrial meat production also relies on the cultivation of monoculture, large crops of a single species, sprayed heavily with herbicides which kill off natural plant and insect life.

12 | Protect against future pandemics.

COVID-19 didn't originate in a factory farm. But past pandemics—including the 2009 H1N1 swine flu that jumped from pig farms in North America to humans, killing hundreds of thousands of people—did. According to the CDC, 6 out of every 10 known infectious diseases in people can be spread from animals, and 3 out of every 4 new or emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals. Scientists warn that industrial factory farms create the perfect conditions for a highly virulent virus to emerge, spread, and kill rapidly.

13 | Protect climate stability.

Studies show that proper grazing of animals reduces overall greenhouse gas emissions, provides essential ecosystem services, increases soil carbon sequestration, and reduces environmental damage. The practices employed by Big Meat—including Big Chicken, Big Pork, and Big Beef—have the opposite impact. Industrial meat production, which includes deforestation for growing millions of acres GMO corn and soy, is a huge contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Want to do your part to cool the planet? Buy your meat from a farmer who is enhancing the soil's ability to sequester carbon.

There's a better way!

Consumers are key to building a better food and farming system. You can help by supporting farmers and ranchers who produce meat using practices that protect your health, the rights of food & farm workers, animal welfare, the environment, and climate stability. You'll find these producers online, at your local farmers markets, through CSAs, and in your local organic retail stores.

To buy direct from local producers of organic, regenerative pasture-raised and grass-fed meat and other products, use this map:

<https://orgcns.org/map>

