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Switch to Food Crops for People

Every farmer who switches to growing food crops for people reduces animal suffering, preserves the environment and potentially helps to reduce world hunger, since ten pounds of plant protein is needed for every pound of meat,¹ protein that could be fed directly to people.

10 hectares of land will produce enough:²

- Meat to feed 2 people
- Corn to feed 10 people
- Grain to feed 24 people
- Soybeans to feed 61 people

**Inch by inch, row by row
I'm going to make this garden grow.
All it takes is a rake and a hoe
And a piece of fertile ground...**

— Pete Seeger

Of Beef and Hunger

In India the average person consumes 11 lbs. of meat a year. In Britain, one of the wealthiest nations, it's 175 lbs.³ In the US it's 275 lbs. of meat, mostly beef. Americans' appetite for beef is huge, resulting in the sale of 6.7 billion burgers a year.⁴

There are nearly three times as many farm animals in the world as there are people: 16.8 billion. Even the most efficient animals consume much more protein than they produce. Cows are the worst, with a 10:1 ratio. Pigs are right behind at 9:1, with chickens at 5:1. All the excess nutrients are lost as manure. Livestock in the United States eat enough wheat and soy beans to feed one billion people annually; almost one-sixth of the world's population.⁵

Since North Americans don't have enough farmland to raise all the beef we eat, we use other nations' farmland to grow our beef for import. The more meat we produce, the more hunger exists.

Meat and the Environment

Producing meat takes a much harder toll on the environment than do food crops for people:

- A pound of beef requires three-quarters of a gallon of oil to produce it. By the time a beef cow reaches its adult weight of over 1200 lbs., it will have "consumed" 283 gallons of oil,⁶ producing 2.8 tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions over 5 years.⁷
- Its manure will produce 20 lbs. of nitrous oxide (N₂O) annually,⁸ a greenhouse gas that is 296 times more powerful than CO₂.



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- Its digestive system will produce 285 lbs. of methane (CH₄) annually,⁹ a greenhouse gas that is 23 times more powerful than CO₂.
- When you add these together, a beef cow will produce 6.8 tons of CO₂ equivalent a year, more than an average family car.¹⁰
- The average meat eater is responsible for 3.8 tons of CO₂ equivalent a year from eating beef.¹¹
- 90% of the packaging used in meat production is not recycled.¹²
- A pound of beef requires 2,500 gallons of water to produce it, leading to water depletion. The Ogallala aquifer is losing 13 trillion gallons of water a year; some wells in Northwest Texas are already running dry.¹³
- The waste from a cow, which is 130 times greater than it is from a human, sometimes

contaminates water systems and soil with disease-bearing organisms.¹⁴

One-Stop Farming in Ontario

Tom Manley's family farm, near the small town of Berwick, Ontario, made the switch from dairy to cash crops in 1988 and became certified organic. Tom went to farmers, friends, family and strangers and managed to raise the start-up funding he needed.

It was a tough sell, getting funding and finding support for his business idea: a one-stop business for feed for animals and people, seeds for fields and gardens and organic fertilizers. Most importantly, it would all be organic in a time when the word still raised eyebrows. Today, Homestead Organics is a hub of activity in an area that once lacked an organic infrastructure, and Tom spends most of his time answering questions from other farmers and spreading the word about organic agriculture.

Molly Thorkildsen and Will Bonsall began farming "veganically" over 20 years ago. Their Khadighar Farm, near Farmington, Maine, uses no animal products whatsoever, including in its fertilizers. Molly and Will prefer this method of farming because of the inefficiency and waste associated with relying on manure that comes from animals high on the food chain. Khadighar Farm is on a path of self-sufficiency, and veganic farming is helping them meet that goal. They grow a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, grains and legumes, using solar-powered irrigation, extensive terraces and ramial (deciduous wood) chips for mulch.

- Ask Farmer Brown: www.askfarmerbrown.com
- Energy Bulletin — farming sustainability: www.energybulletin.net/1202.html
- Fertilizing without manure: www.navs-online.org/voice/plant.html
- Genetic engineering and world hunger: www.greens.org/s-r/19/19-01.html
- Organic Consumers Association: www.organicconsumers.org
- Plants for a Future: www.pfaf.org/leaflets/whyplts.php