

Fury over factories

It took an entrepreneurial truck driver to change the face of agriculture forever. In 1936 John Tyson picked up a load of 500 chickens, and instead of taking them to a local slaughterhouse, he hauled them 600 miles to Chicago where he could get a better price. In doing so, Tyson broke the bond between farmers and local slaughterhouses, showing that higher profits were available through mass production and transportation. Not content to rest on his groundbreaking laurels, Tyson went on to buy up hatcheries, feed plants, slaughterhouses and production contracts until Tyson Foods was able to own and manage their chicken production from start to finish. Thus, factory farming was born.

A Whole New Landscape

Confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), or factory farms, have grown dramatically since John Tyson's first chicken delivery. They accounted for 30% of the world's meat production in 1990, 40% in 2000 and are spreading rapidly.¹ Globalized trade, lower meat prices and

- Ask Farmer Brown: www.askfarmerbrown.com
- Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals: www.humanefood.ca
- Compassion in World Farming Trust: www.ciwf.org.uk
- Farm Animal Reform Movement: www.farmusa.org
- Farm Sanctuary: www.farmsanctuary.org
- Food Animal Concerns Trust: www.fact.cc

Animals raised for food in this country, especially those in industrial or factory farms — over nine billion a year — are forced to endure the most unimaginable kind of suffering.

— Amy Trakinski, animal law attorney

mass urbanization are driving the spread of industrialized meat production to all areas of the planet. Factory farms are now seeing their fastest growth in Asia, Africa and Latin America. These gigantic production machines can be found close to nearly any large urban center. Livestock inhabits two-thirds of the planet's agricultural land. China is home to over half the world's pig population of 950 million. Poultry production worldwide has quadrupled in the past 50 years, with a global fowl population of 4.2 billion in 1961 ballooning to 17.8 billion today.²

Factory farms make great short-term business sense. By confining animals in one location and controlling everything about their environment, a farmer can maximize the productivity of meat, eggs or dairy products. Pasture land is limited, so controlling animals' diets allows farmers to feed them large amounts of food to maximize production. Factory farms make it easier and cheaper to gather, slaughter and bring animals to market, while antibiotics are readily available to combat the spread of illness caused by confining large numbers of animals together.

Yet factory farming isn't for everyone. The entire industry is run by a select group of very powerful corporations. In the United States, 81% of all beef is processed by just four companies (Tyson, ConAgra, Cargill and Farmland Nation).³

For animals, factory farms have created an intolerable level of suffering, with overcrowding, heavy antibiotic use, disease, transport and slaughter transforming sentient beings into production units, forcing them into a life of confinement and continued suffering.

For employees, factory farms have created a dangerous, underpaid, morale-crushing environment. Workers are required to work as quickly as possible to sustain the never-ending demand for meat. Working around terrified animals and a lot of machinery includes an inherent risk of injury and a wide range of diseases transmitted from infected animals, often under unsanitary conditions.

For the environment, factory farms create a dangerous situation, using large amounts of water and resources, leaving contaminated water, soil and air everywhere they exist. They are consuming natural resources far faster than nature can replenish them.

For people, factory farms are creating widespread health problems. Since the inception of industrialized farming a half-century ago, the incidences of cancer, diabetes, heart disease and obesity have skyrocketed in North America. Diets this high in animal products are making us sick.⁴

Forward from Factories

We need to foster a new awareness beyond factory farming. CAFOs must practice more humane ways of handling animals, and consumers must become more educated about the benefits of eating organic, grass-fed meat and switching to a plant-based diet that is inherently healthier for humans, for the environment and for animals everywhere.

Global Meat Production in 2004⁵

Source	Quantity in million tons	Percentage of world total
Pork	100.9	38
Poultry	77.2	30
Beef	62.2	25
Other (sheep, goats, yak ...)	12.6	7

