

Dear Minister Wilkinson,

October 7, 2021

Congratulations on your recent re-election. We met briefly on August 11 at a Highlands United Church interfaith event. There I quoted research findings that when citizens are required to engage in particular behaviours to solve societal problems, they often come to support the new measures. Mandatory seatbelt legislation was loudly opposed until enacted, after which most populations were soon on board. Similarly, limitations on smoking now constitute a widely-supported norm. That's why, on climate action, governments need to lead -- including on the crucial issue of livestock and meat/dairy.

Production of livestock for meat and dairy accounts for at least 15% of anthropogenic GHGs, in carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. The problem is not meat itself, but the massive scale of factory farms and intensive methods of raising the cattle, chickens and pigs, which uses more than 75% of global agricultural land, churns out unsustainable amounts of GHGs, sets up humanity for more pandemics, over-uses and undermines antibiotics, and convinces consumers to eat more meat than is healthy.

Politically difficult as it is to say aloud, cutting back on livestock and meat is no longer a radical idea. Internationally, polls show that large segments of populations approve of meat reduction, and some consumers are moderating their intake or going vegan. Canada itself is explicit on the need to cut back on animal-source foods, in our newest revised Food Guide that we got after Jane Philpott directed her staff in 2016 to refuse closed-door meetings with lobbyists for corporate meat, dairy, and processed foods.

At the North Vancouver event, I believe you said that loss of biodiversity and species extinctions keep you awake at night. Well, a major culprit is livestock for meat/dairy. Having to fatten billions of livestock animals is by far the main reason for Amazon deforestation to grow crops like soybeans -- not for tofu burgers but for livestock feed.

Here's what you can do, at COP26 and beyond:

- Minimize direct and indirect subsidies to livestock-focussed agribusiness;
- Work to enact tougher environmental regulations on intensive factory farms;
- State publicly that too many livestock and too much meat are environmental problems;
- Work with Health Canada and its Food Guide to urge citizens to eat less meat/dairy;
- Recognize the value of campaigns including #JustLivestockTransition, which will be at COP26 (as will well-paid lobbyists for meat agribusiness);
- Here at home, support government procurement that pivots away from animal-sourced foods, and direct your staff to serve plant-based meals and snacks at events.

If you'd like a brief (I promise) presentation on the science of livestock's environmental footprint, I could come to your office at any convenient time.

Sincerely,

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[www.eleanorboyle.com](http://www.eleanorboyle.com) | Author: *High Steaks: Why and How to Eat Less Meat* (New Society Publishers 2012) | In press: *Mobilize Food! Wartime Inspiration for Environmental Victory Today* (2022)

## Meat / dairy and climate: Information Sheet

- Livestock use over 75% of the world's agricultural land, and are responsible for most ongoing deforestation, yet produce less than 20% of global calories.
- Livestock production creates close to 3/4 of Agricultural GHGs.
- There are 25 billion livestock animals on the planet, most raised intensively in factory farms, requiring unecological amounts of feedcrops and producing toxic amounts of manure along with carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.

The following organizations / scientists, and more, have declared that today's intensive livestock industry and large-scale meat consumption undermine climate stability.

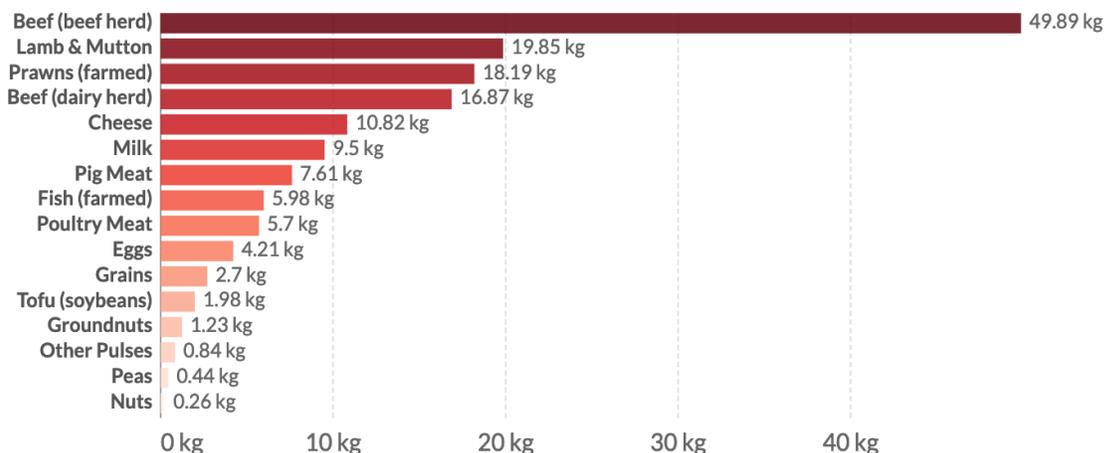
- IPCC 2019: *Climate Change and Land: IPCC Special Report*. August 2019.
- *The Lancet* 2019: “Food in the Anthropocene: The EAT-Lancet Commission on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems.”
- World Resources Institute 2018: *Creating a Sustainable Food Future*.
- UN Food and Agric Organisation 2018: *More than Meat: Shaping the Future of Livestock*.
- *Science* 2018: “Reducing Food's Environmental Impacts Through Producers and Consumers.” Poore, J., and Nemecek, T. *Science* 360. 987-992.
- *Nature* 2018: “Options For Keeping the Food System Within Environmental Limits.” Springmann, M. et al.

### Greenhouse gas emissions per 100 grams of protein

Our World  
in Data

Greenhouse gas emissions are measured in kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalents (kgCO<sub>2</sub>eq) per 100 grams of protein. This means non-CO<sub>2</sub> greenhouse gases are included and weighted by their relative warming impact.

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Source: Poore, J., & Nemecek, T. (2018). Additional calculations by Our World in Data.  
 Note: Data represents the global average greenhouse gas emissions of food products based on a large meta-analysis of food production covering 38,700 commercially viable farms in 119 countries.  
 OurWorldInData.org/environmental-impacts-of-food • CC BY

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