

Speech on Veganism

provided by [Vegan Horizon](#) on Substack,

People often ask me — and maybe you're wondering too: "Why are so many individuals advocating for veganism these days? Aren't there other issues that deserve our attention as well?"

It's true: there are many important issues and problems in the world. And obviously, veganism isn't the only cause we should care about.

However, what makes veganism so special is that it affects so many different areas of life simultaneously. I was not aware of that when I was younger, never really learnt about it in school or at home.

And in case you've had a similar experience, I'd like to give you a glimpse into the astonishing things I've learned over the last few years — and that have fundamentally changed my view of the world.

My first point begins with an excerpt from a United Nations report:

"The livestock sector emerges as one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global"¹

Environmental harms caused and accelerated by the animal industry include soil degradation, species extinction, climate change, water pollution, air pollution, acid rain, overfishing, and the irreversible destruction of marine ecosystems.

The consumption of animal products is also responsible for over 70% of rainforest destruction in South America² — and generally the leading cause of deforestation worldwide.³

Additionally, animal farming generates more than five times the greenhouse gas emissions of all aircraft in the world taken together.⁴

¹ <https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/9655af93-7f88-58fc-84e8-d70a9a4d8bec/>

² <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/10/12/124004/meta>

³ <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/whats-driving-deforestation#.Wq06PZPOXBJ>

⁴ <https://veganhorizon.substack.com/p/livestock-produces-five-times-the>

Recently, an article in The Guardian revealed that the emissions from just 13 dairy farms match those of the entire United Kingdom.⁵

Second point:

Working conditions for employees in the animal industry are often cruel, leading to frustration, despair, severe accidents, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, alcoholism, and an increased risk of suicide.⁶

Working conditions in the animal industry are regularly described as “modern slavery”.⁷

After thorough research into the working conditions of the U.S. animal industry, *Bloomberg* published an article titled, “America’s Worst Graveyard Shift Is Grinding Up Workers”.⁸

A *Business Insider* headline reads, “The meat industry is hiding a dark secret, as workers at ‘America’s worst job’ wade through seas of blood, guts, and grease”.⁹

The slaughterhouse employees put at risk to satisfy society’s taste for meat are overwhelmingly people of color and members of other disadvantaged minorities.

Third point:

In its official statement, the world's largest organization of nutrition experts, the *Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, confirms that a balanced vegan diet is, quote, “appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes.”¹⁰

According to the physician and bestselling author Michael Greger, abstaining from animal products has a preventive effect against 14 of the 15 deadliest diseases of our time.¹¹ Scientifically confirmed health benefits of a vegan diet include (among many others):

- Reduced risk of various types of cancer,¹²
- Significantly fewer cardiovascular diseases,¹³

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/15/emissions-from-13-dairy-firms-match-those-of-entire-uk-says-report>

⁶ For sources, see: <https://veganhorizon.substack.com/p/vegan-a-lifestyle-for-the-privileged>

⁷ See, for instance: <https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-modern-slavery-at-the-heart-of-german-slaughterhouse-outbreak/a-53396228>

⁸ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2017-12-29/america-s-worst-graveyard-shift-is-grinding-up-workers>

⁹ <https://www.businessinsider.in/the-meat-industry-is-hiding-a-dark-secret-as-workers-at-americas-worst-job-wade-through-seas-of-blood-guts-and-grease/articleshow/62370832.cms>

¹⁰ Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27886704/>

¹¹ Dr. Greger explains “The Role of Diet in Preventing, Arresting, and Reversing Our Top 15 Killers” [here](#)

¹² See, for instance: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25648405>, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3249408/pdf/kwr289.pdf>, <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0020456>

¹³ See, for instance: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4315380/>, <https://doi.org/10.1161/STROKEAHA.111.635557>, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5466936/>

- Lower risk of diabetes,¹⁴
- Fewer cases of food poisoning,¹⁵
- Reduced need for medications in old age,¹⁶ and
- Reduced risk of internal inflammations¹⁷

Furthermore, the animal industry is the leading cause of antibiotic resistance.¹⁸

In many countries, including the U.S., more than half of all antibiotics are used on farmed animals,¹⁹ making the industry an ideal breeding ground for resistant bacteria.

In the long run, this will render many types of surgeries impossible, and horrible diseases untreatable. According to predictions, by 2050, 10 million people will die each year from resistant bacteria — more than the current deaths from all types of cancer combined.²⁰

Fourth point:

While 24,000 [people](#) die from hunger and malnutrition every day,²¹ our society wastes massive amounts of [grain](#),²² [corn](#),²³ [soy](#),²⁴ and [fresh water](#)²⁵ to grow livestock — resources that could be directly consumed by humans.

Animals are an incredibly inefficient food source. It takes [about 100 calories](#) of grain to produce just 12 calories of chicken or 3 calories worth of beef.²⁶

The world's cattle alone consume a quantity of food equal to the caloric needs of 8.7 billion people²⁷ (which is more than the current world population!)

And while every third human suffers from water scarcity, the production of one pound of beef uses as much water as a [135 days](#)' worth of showers.²⁸

Fifth and final point:

¹⁴ https://www.vegan-verstehen.de/vv-bricks/?page_id=2723

¹⁵ https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/Infekt/Jahrbuch/Jahrbuch_2020.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

¹⁶ See, for instance: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/59.5.1171S> and <https://doi.org/10.1177/15598276211048812>

¹⁷ https://www.vegan-verstehen.de/vv-bricks/?page_id=2798

¹⁸ <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2023/1/8/23542789/big-meat-antibiotics-resistance-fda>

¹⁹ <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/david-wallinga-md/antibiotic-use-remains-far-too-intensive-us-livestock>

²⁰ See, for instance: https://www.vegan-verstehen.de/vv-bricks/?page_id=2789 and <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34367112/#:~:text=Rising%20antibiotic%20resistance%20is%20a,the%20pre%20antibiotic%20era%20recurrence>.

²¹ <https://www.wfp.org/news/world-wealth-9-million-people-die-every-year-hunger-wfp-chief-tells-food-system-summit>

²² <https://www.vox.com/2014/8/21/6053187/cropland-map-food-fuel-animal-feed>

²³ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/crops/corn-and-other-feed-grains/feed-grains-sector-at-a-glance/>

²⁴ https://ourworldindata.org/images/published/Global-soy-production-to-end-use_1618.webp

²⁵ <https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1029/2019WR026995>

²⁶ <https://www.vox.com/2014/8/21/6053187/cropland-map-food-fuel-animal-feed>

²⁷ <https://www.petaindia.com/issues/animals-used-for-food/environment>

²⁸ <https://www.theatlantic.com/sponsored/vmware-2017/burger-water/1802/>

The animal industry — even when you ignore its effects on public health, world hunger, and exploited workers — remains one of the largest, if not *the largest*, source of mental and physical suffering in the world.

Most of us wouldn't tolerate animal abuse if it happened right in front of our eyes.

Yet, every 30 minutes, as many animals are killed for human consumption as people have died in the six years of World War II — the largest and deadliest conflict in human history.²⁹ Every 30 minutes! And this doesn't even count fish and other marine animals.

Contrary to common belief, even the production of eggs and dairy products are deeply cruel. In the egg industry, it is a standard practice to kill all male chicks by gassing them, suffocating them in waste bins, or by shredding them alive.³⁰

To make them lactate, dairy cows are forcibly impregnated over and over again. They are bred to produce 10 times as much milk as they would naturally³¹, and as a result often suffer from painful udder infections.³²

Newborn calves in the dairy industry are separated from their mother immediately after birth in a traumatizing procedure — many of them are dehorned and castrated without anesthesia.

While cows have a natural life expectancy of 20 years, it is common in the industry — even on organic farms — for cows to break down from exhaustion after 4 or 5 years of continuous pregnancies and milk production.³³ Milk production declines around that time anyways, so if the dairy cows are still standing, they are killed for hamburgers and beef regardless.³⁴

Now, I have talked about:

- impacts on climate change and environmental harms,
- horrific working conditions,
- public health,
- world hunger, and
- animal suffering.

Having heard all this, take a deep breath and answer this question for yourself:

Should we support this industry?

Should we pay with our money for this incredibly destructive and completely unnecessary industry to continue to exist?

²⁹ <https://plantbasednews.org/culture/ethics/billboard-campaign-slaughterhouse-stats-ww2/>

³⁰ <https://www.peta.org/blog/ban-grinding-chicks-alive/>

³¹ <https://vegsoc.org/eating-veggie/why-eat-veggie/cattle>

³² <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/animals-used-food-factsheets/cows-milk-cruel-unhealthy-product>

³³ Adapted from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcN7SGGoCNI>

³⁴ Adapted from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcN7SGGoCNI>

The answer seems more than obvious to me today.

And I have consumed animals for most of my life. Clearly, I'm in no position to point fingers.

But I agree with Jonathan Foer when he says:

“Our response to this industry is ultimately a test of how we respond to the weak, the invisible, the silent — it is a test of how we act when no one is forcing us to act one way or another. (...) Those who live today belong to the generations that now know better. (...) We are the ones who will rightly be asked: What did you do when you learned the truth about eating animals?”

The vegan lifestyle may not be perfect. But it offers a huge contribution to reducing the many harms I have talked about.

To wrap up, let me summarize once again — and now from a positive perspective:

A vegan lifestyle not only avoids unnecessary violence against animals, prevents many forms of environmental destruction and improves your own health, but also protects your fellow human beings from hunger, misery and exploitation.

Honestly, can you think of a more convincing reason to try out a new diet and lifestyle?

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Thank you so much for listening.