



## **Another year, another COP - yet the question remains: *Will industrial animal agriculture and food be swept under the carpet once again?***

The data is very clear that animal agriculture accounts for 14.5% percent of all anthropogenic Greenhouse Gas emission (GHGs)<sup>1</sup>. In simple terms, that's more than the amount produced by every single vehicle globally (cars, lorries, mopeds, even planes) which contribute less at around 13%<sup>2</sup>.

Despite this, the environmental damage and climate impact of animal agriculture always seems to be the elephant in the room at COPs. As delegates start to make their way to the UAE for this year's United Nations Climate Change Conference, whether delegates want to talk about it or not, the fact remains: *We have to change the way we eat.*

The words *have to* are important here, as we simply must. It isn't something we 'should try to do', or something that 'would be good if we did'. We must act. The urgency to act has been detailed again and again, in scientific paper after scientific paper. We need to eat less meat as the planet cannot cope if we don't.

The EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, and Health's Report stated that: '*The analysis shows that staying within the safe operating space for food systems requires a combination of substantial shifts toward mostly plant-based dietary patterns, dramatic reductions in food losses and waste, and major improvements in food production practices.*' The report ultimately recommended that: '*Transformation to healthy diets by 2050 will require substantial dietary shifts. Global consumption of fruits, vegetables, nuts and legumes will have to double, and consumption of foods such as red meat and sugar will have to be reduced by more than 50%. A diet rich in plant-based foods and with fewer animal source foods confers both improved health and environmental benefits.*'<sup>3</sup>

At the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation, we fully appreciate it can be a sensitive subject 'telling people what they can and can't eat', but that isn't what we, nor anyone, is suggesting. Nonetheless, global governments can and should be transparent with the public about the reality of the situation when it comes to modern meat consumption and production practices, and the direct negative effects on climate and environment. They can drive small but effective nudges. At the time of COP26 in Glasgow, our Patron Henry Smith MP wrote: '*A relatively small change in diets could return enough land to forest, to compensate for all the remaining emissions from livestock*'. This remains as true today as it was then.

This isn't about making everyone vegetarian or vegan - it's about keeping future generations fed and environmentally secure. Global meat and dairy consumption must be reduced, so rather than governments shying away from the topic, or burying their heads in the sand when it comes to change, including novel technologies (such as clean meat), they should be

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<sup>1</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

<sup>2</sup> <https://iapwa.org/the-environmental-cost-of-animal-agriculture/#:~:text=As%20a%20result%2C%20animal%20agriculture,%26%20Rosier%2C%202021%3B%20University%20of>

<sup>3</sup> [https://eatforum.org/content/uploads/2019/07/EAT-Lancet\\_Commission\\_Summary\\_Report.pdf](https://eatforum.org/content/uploads/2019/07/EAT-Lancet_Commission_Summary_Report.pdf)



doing everything they can to encourage, harbour and enable these businesses and modern dietary changes.

This new technology can provide an important solution for the fact land use for food production currently accounts for almost 50% of our planet's habitable land. Regulation processes for things like clean meat should be sped up, investment should be made, and a forward-thinking attitude to our peoples' planet and future should be prioritised, rather than just defending the way things have always been done. After all, when emails were invented there doesn't seem to be documented evidence of post office workers lobbying against computers, or postmen and women marching in the streets against the new technology. Technology is constantly adapting and we need to adapt with it.

In recent weeks the Italian Parliament voted to back a law banning the production, sale or import of cultivated meat or animal feed (also known as clean meat/meat grown outside of the animal), citing this was a defence of Italian traditions.

Whilst many were jubilant, the truth is that this is exactly the attitude that will cost the planet dearly, and works against the goals of COP28. The same goes for cases from the meat and dairy industries in the EU and around the world, lobbying (often successfully) for bans on words like 'burger', 'sausage' and 'milk' for alternatives. Whilst the industry digs its heels to maintain the status quo, polls have shown in the UK, for example, that around 50% of people choose alternative milks in their coffees each day. There is no consumer confusion here - people have just made a new choice for whatever reason - taste, health, or animal welfare.

So, it's time for the delegates at COP28 in UAE to also make a choice - a choice to stop ignoring that industrial animal agriculture is a significant, scientifically proven and widely known issue for the climate, and instead start working to bring farming back to what it used to be, to bring meat and dairy consumption back to sustainable levels. People are relying on their leadership – we need a commitment to immediate global action towards creating sustainable, healthy food systems for the benefit of animals, people and the planet.