It doesn’t have to be like this

Animals reared free-range and organically can roam freely and behave more naturally. Food produced humanely in this way can be safer for humans, better for the environment, and kinder to the animals.

In partnership with Food Animal Initiative, the WSPA has set up the Model Farm Project (www.modelfarmproject.org), which aims to establish an international network of development and demonstration farms. These show that humane and sustainable farming is a practical and viable reality.

What you can do

The WSPA is working with organisations throughout the world to phase out intensive farming. YOU can help make a difference to farm animals worldwide:

• If you eat animal produce, avoid intensively farmed meat, milk and eggs. Choose free-range and organic food produced humanely. In the UK, look out for certifications such as Soil Association and RSPCA Freedom Food.

• Watch out for misleading labels such as “fresh” or “farm assured” (unrelated to animal welfare) and question unclear labelling.

• Ask your local supermarket to stock more free-range and organic products. Use customer comment cards and helplines to tell suppliers you care about farm animal welfare.

• When eating out, complain if you see cruel products on the menu.

• Send for the WSPA’s Farm Animal Welfare Information Pack.

• Order and distribute copies of this leaflet.

To take action, visit wspa.org.uk

For more information, visit www.wspafarmwelfare.org – our portal for governments and animal welfare organisations.

World Society for the Protection of Animals

The facts about our food: Intensive farming

Each year 61 billion farm animals are reared for meat, milk or eggs worldwide.

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Food safety
Antibiotics and hormones fed to intensively farmed animals can leave residues in eggs, meat and dairy products. This may lead to increased risk of human cancers. Use of antibiotics is also believed to be encouraging antibiotic-resistant microbes (such as Salmonella and E-coli), making it more difficult to fight both animal and human diseases.

Intensively farmed meat, which comes from inactive animals fed on high-energy food, often contains high levels of fat—linked to obesity, diabetes, cancers, heart disease and strokes.

The environment
Water: Nitrate contamination from manure seeping into groundwater may create greater risk of miscarriage in pregnant women. Heavy metals pollution from manure in rivers serving as water supplies is also likely to affect embryonic development.

Air: As manure decomposes, it releases chemicals into the air. Residents living near intensive farms report higher rates of respiratory problems, headaches, nausea and fatigue.

Soil: Intensive farming relies on large quantities of feed for the animals, which is often grown intensively using chemical fertilisers and pesticides—linked to the loss of soil fertility and farmland wildlife.

Food security
Intensive farming demands a large share of the cereal harvest to feed the animals: for example, poultry need to consume around ten times their natural milk yield through a combination of selective breeding and high-energy feed. The strain of this overproduction can cause metabolic diseases, painful udder infections and high levels of lameness. In indoor cubicles, where some cows are permanently tethered, lameness is exacerbated by manure-laden concrete floors.

Rural livelihoods
Highly mechanised intensive farms threaten rural employment. In the UK and the USA, the number of farmers has been dramatically reduced. In England, for example, the number of farm workers has dropped by over 90% over the past 50 years. In developing countries, intensive farming obstructs poverty elimination by driving local farmers out of business.

Battery cages
Three quarters of the world’s 5.6 billion egg-laying hens are confined in battery cages. These cages are so small that the hens cannot stretch their wings, so barren that they have no nest in which to lay their eggs, and so restricting that the birds’ boxes become brittle and can snap through lack of exercise.

Sow stalls and farrowing crates
In many countries, pregnant pigs are caged in individual sow stalls (or “gestation crates”). These are so narrow that the sow is unable to take more than one step or turn around throughout her four-month pregnancy. Before giving birth, she is moved to the equally restricting farrowing crate, where she cannot move other than to stand up and lie down.

Barren pig pens
Piglets are weaned prematurely at 3-4 weeks of age and fattened for meat in overcrowded, often dirty pens. They live on bare concrete or slatted floors without bedding material. They are unable to carry out natural behaviours such as rooting, foraging and exploring.

Zero-grazing dairy systems
In many parts of the world, intensively farmed cows produce around ten times their natural milk yield through a combination of selective breeding and high-energy feed. The strain of this overproduction can cause metabolic diseases, painful udder infections and high levels of lameness. In indoor cubicles, where some cows are permanently tethered, lameness is exacerbated by manure-laden concrete floors.

Cattle feedlots
In the feedlot system, thousands of cattle are confined in grassless outdoor enclosures, where they are fed almost exclusively on grain. Very common in the United States, this system is spreading to countries such as Brazil, China, India, the Philippines and Australia.

Veal crates
In some countries, calves reared for veal are kept in solitary confinement, in crates so narrow that they are unable to turn around. They are fed a low-digestible diet to produce “white veal”. This practice was banned in the UK in 1990 and throughout the European Union in 2007, but remains in many countries including most of the United States.

It’s not only the animals that suffer

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