Why Slow Meat?

Meat is a pivotal issue, emblematic of the unsustainable and unethical practices that are part and parcel of the industrial food system. By championing better methods of animal husbandry and better consumption practices, together we are creating a healthier and happier world.

Better Meat, Less Meat

The average U.S. resident eats 270.7 pounds of meat each year, more than double the global average and roughly five times more than we did a century ago.

Our increasing demand for cheap meat has caused a corresponding growth in industrial production of meat and placed the concentration of power in the hands of just a few large companies. These companies exploit their workers and livestock in order to satisfy the market’s demand for a large quantity of meat at a low cost.

If we resolve to eating “better meat, less,” however, we can begin to shift the power away from these corporations and empower producers who raise their animals according to the highest standards. By eating consciously and locally, you are choosing to support ethically sound and sustainable practices while reducing your environmental impact.

https://www.slowfoodusa.org/slow-meat
If we want to eat meat to excess and pay little, it drives farmers to produce large quantities of poor quality meat. The animals' life cycles are sped up, causing them to grow or produce at speeds that their bodies cannot endure and dramatically shortening their life span. Cheap meat arrives on the market and the vicious cycle continues as the low prices encourage us to fill up our trolleys and consume more and more.

Most of our daily food shopping is done in supermarkets where the price of chicken per kilo is often lower than that of a pepper. Considering how much an animal has been eating during its life, how can it cost so little to take an animal from birth to slaughter?

Two principles drive the modern production cycle for meat: speed and quantity. The more that is produced cheaply, based on an industrialized farming model, the higher the costs for the environment, public health, animals, farmers and people's right to food. Intensive farms use more food than they produce: food resources consumed by livestock are far higher than those that they supply us in the form of meat, milk and eggs.
Health

The consumption level of animal proteins and fats in developed countries is so high that it is causing diseases. The excessive consumption of meat - combined with other factors - is associated with an increase in obesity and the presentation of cardiovascular disorders. Diets high in saturated fats are associated with increasing levels of cholesterol in the blood and type 2 diabetes.

The relationship between certain oncological diseases and high meat consumption (red meats in particular) have been known and highlighted for some years. Based on the evidence, the most recent guidelines (from the World Cancer Research Fund and the Harvard University School of Public Health) recommend a moderate consumption of red meat (on average two portions per week) and only occasional use of cured meats (salami, ham and sausages). Cooking methods are also important: it is best to avoid grilled meat, particularly when cooked for a long time or if it appears burnt.

Animals raised in intensive farms are commonly supplied with antibiotics to prevent diseases, which occur frequently due to cramped living conditions. This results in bacteria developing resistance; meaning antibiotics are no longer able to stop them. Antibiotics are also passed on through manure and permeate the soil, thereby contaminating rivers and lakes.

Antibiotics are also present in the meat we eat and are assimilated by human beings, making it increasingly difficult to fight off even a common flu. Such harsh preventative measures employed in industrial production are not necessary in small-scale, traditional farms where animals are generally less prone to falling sick.
Standard industrial farming

What is it?

The livestock industry chases an obsession of sorts: to select ever-more productive breeds who rely on a diet increasingly rich in protein, to provide high yields of meat and milk in the shortest time possible.

Little movement, no freedom, reduced life cycles and preventative treatments: To answer the growing demand for meat that is cheap and produced quickly, pastures have been replaced with animal tethering, and grass is substituted by silage.

The bond between farming and agriculture, animals and land becomes broken.

What it means for animals

Animal farming throughout the world has become increasingly intensive. This is partly a response to demand from consumers for cheaper meat, milk and eggs and to the pressure on farmers from supermarkets for cheaper produce. Animals have thereby become productive units rather than living beings.

Intensive farming across the world can involve:

- Keeping large numbers of animals in restricted spaces or cages (stables can contain up to 1000 cattle!)

- Rearing animals together in large groups, often without ever seeing the sunlight
trimming and wing clipping

- Using high levels of antibiotics to prevent diseases and accelerate growth
- Selectively breeding animals to grow faster or produce more meat, milk or eggs.
- Transporting them long distances for slaughter, with restricted conditions and great suffering.

Growth rate of a chicken on the 40th day of life, in 1950 and 2008.
Good Practices

What should you look for when shopping?

» First of all, choose to eat less meat and of better quality

» Choose meat from animals that have been farmed and slaughtered in your country and locally, where possible

» Choose high quality meat from sustainable farms that respect the welfare of animals

» Vary the species and breeds of animals you choose, considering alternative meat and native breeds

» Choose meat from cooperatives, associations or farms with strict production protocols on animal feed and welfare, who also provide clear information on the traceability of their products. And remember to always read the label carefully!

» Distrust very low prices as they are often a sign of poor animal feed quality, exploitation, hidden costs for the environment or terrible work conditions for those working in the farming and meat industry

» Be more tolerant towards fat found in meat

» Save money by making more unconventional choices, buy offal, internal organs and lesser-known cuts. Try to retrieve traditional recipes, using all the parts of the animal, and helping to reduce waste

» Ask your local butcher for high quality meat and encourage him to select meat from animals raised according to good welfare practices

» Increase the consumption of legumes, pulses and plant varieties that can substitute meat (such as beans and oily seeds)

» Choose local and seasonal products, and avoid those that have been imported.