

## IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS FOR MEAT

Meat is one of the most environmentally intensive and polluting products in the world. Meat production consumes about eighty percent of global agricultural land,<sup>i</sup> is the dominant source of water contamination across the United States,<sup>ii</sup> contributes significantly to climate change,<sup>iii</sup> and is responsible for about sixty percent of global biodiversity loss.<sup>iv</sup> There are significant opportunities to improve farming practices that reduce the environmental impacts of this supply chain, but the industry has been slow to implement reforms.

Companies that sell large quantities of meat have a critical role to play in ensuring suppliers are using environmentally sustainable practices. The bulk of meat's environmental impact comes from the vast quantities of feed required to raise livestock and poultry, as well as manure and livestock enteric emissions.

Responsible food companies need to adopt standards that require meat suppliers to implement more sustainable farming practices in the following areas:

- **Sustainable feed sourcing**: All meat must be raised on feed from suppliers verifiably implementing practices to prevent agricultural run-off pollution, soil erosion, and native ecosystem clearance across the supply chain. These practices include:
  - Enrollment in a nutrient optimization plan to prevent excess fertilizer application;
  - Implementation of cover crops and conservation tillage to protect soil health and reduce run-off;
  - A policy against clearing native ecosystems, such as forests, grasslands, and wetlands;
  - A sourcing goal to incorporate rotationally-raised small grains into the feed ration, in order to support diverse crop rotations and improve soil health;
  - Incorporation of feed additives that help reduce livestock emissions.
- **Responsible manure management**: In order to reduce emission and water pollution from manure, meat companies must:
  - Provide centralized manure processing facilities to process all manure generated by direct and contract suppliers,
  - Have a policy against siting new or expanded CAFOs in watersheds already classified as "impaired" from nutrient pollution.
- **Greenhouse gas emissions reduction**: Each retailer must have a time-bound goal to reduce GHG emissions across its supply chain, including requiring meat suppliers to reduce emissions from direct and contract suppliers, as well as feed production.

These standards must be enforced using time-bound targets and verification methods, such as third-party audits, with progress reported to the public on a regular basis. Food companies should also set a goal to increase sales from plant-based options to help shift consumers to more sustainable diets. See how food companies are performing on environmental standards for meat at <http://www.mightyearth.org/meat-scorecard> and contact [Lucia@mightyearth.org](mailto:Lucia@mightyearth.org) to learn more.

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<sup>i</sup> Max Roser and Hannah Ritchie (2018) - "Land Cover". *Published online at OurWorldInData.org*. Retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/land-cover>

<sup>ii</sup> "Nonpoint Source Pollution: the Nation's largest Water Quality Problem" United States Environmental Protection Agency. <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyNET.exe/20004PZG.TXT?ZyActionD=ZyDocument&Client=EPA&Index=1995+Thru+1999&Docs=&Query=&Time=&EndTime=&SearchMethod=1&TocRestrict=n&Toc=&TocEntry=&QField=&QFieldYear=&QFieldMonth=&Q>

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iii “Tackling Climate Change Through Livestock: Key Facts and Findings” FAO

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/es/item/197623/icode/>

iv “Vast animal-feed crops to satisfy our meat needs are destroying planet.” The Guardian. October 5, 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/oct/05/vast-animal-feed-crops-meat-needs-destroying-planet>