

## Eating quinoa may harm Bolivian farmers, but eating meat harms us all

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Bolivian villagers aren't the only ones faced with the prospect of going hungry. It is estimated that more than 850 million people worldwide do not have enough to eat. But the solution to this crisis does not lie in abstaining from quinoa (whose meteoric rise in popularity cannot be attributed solely to vegans, many of whom have never touched the stuff) and other healthy vegan foods. According to Worldwatch, it is animal agriculture that is the real villain because meat consumption is an inefficient use of grain – the grain is used more efficiently when consumed directly by humans. Growth in meat output requires feeding grain to animals, creating competition for grain between affluent meat eaters and the world's poor.

With hundreds of millions of hungry people worldwide, it is criminally wasteful to feed perfectly edible food to farmed animals in order to produce meat, rather than feeding it directly to people – especially when you consider that it takes 4.5 pounds of grain to make one pound of chicken meat and 7.3 pounds of grain to produce one pound of pork. Even fish on fish farms are fed up to five pounds of wild-caught fish in order to produce one pound of farmed-fish flesh. This is inefficiency at its worst. Yes, your beef or pork may be locally grown, but what about the animals' feed? Vegans aren't gobbling up all the soybeans – cattle are. A staggering 97% of the world's soya crop is fed to livestock. It would take 40m tonnes of food to eliminate the most extreme cases of world hunger, yet nearly 20 times that amount of grain – a whopping 760m tonnes – is fed to farmed animals every year in order to produce meat. The world's cattle alone consume enough food to sustain nine billion people, which is what the world's human population is projected to be by 2050.

Because vegans eat plant foods directly, instead of indirectly eating bushels and bushels of grain and soya that have been funnelled through animals first, even vegans who sometimes eat exotic foods grown in other countries still make a fraction of the impact on the environment that meat eaters do (many of whom also eat exotic foods). Enough food for a vegan can be produced on just one-sixth of an acre of land, while it takes 3¼ acres of land to produce sufficient food for a meat eater. Vegfam, which funds sustainable plant food projects, estimates that a 10-acre farm can support 60 people by growing soybeans, 24 people by growing wheat or 10 people by growing maize – but only two by raising cattle.

According to a United Nations report, the meat industry is "one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global", and the UN has concluded that a global shift towards a vegan diet is vital to save the world from hunger, fuel poverty and the worst impacts of climate change. A study published last October by the European Commission found that switching to a vegetarian diet results in twice the carbon emissions savings of switching to an electric car.

Aside from their environmental impact, the meat, dairy and egg industries cause immense suffering to more than a billion animals every year in the UK alone, most of whom spend their entire lives crammed into dark, filthy sheds. They don't get to breathe fresh air until they are on their way to the abattoir, where many have their throats slit while they are still conscious.

We have the power to end hunger and save lives – both human and animal – every time we sit down to eat. We should take that responsibility with more than a grain of, ahem, quinoa.

630 words

### A L'ATTENTION DES CANDIDATS

- Ne pas écrire sur le texte, ne pas surligner ou souligner
- Rendre l'article à l'examineur avant de quitter la salle