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## **PROVIEH Position Paper on the effects of excessive meat and dairy production and consumption**

### **The facts**

Livestock husbandry for meat and dairy production causes 18 % of global man made greenhouse gas emissions (ghg-e, in CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalents) according to an FAO study published in 2006, making it one of the main sources for climate change-transport “only” causes 14 % of ghg-e! More recent research shows the FAO study to be incomplete, so that the contribution is now estimated even higher (35 %).

Factory farming is proven to have an especially dire impact on nature, animals and the climate. According to the Worldwatch Institute, by 2004 already 74 % of poultry, 50 % of pigs, 43 % of beef and 63 % of eggs were produced in factory style farms, trends showing a rise since then. Nevertheless, industrial livestock husbandry and meat & dairy consumption are still not part of the political reflections concerning mitigation efforts to stop climate change and loss of biodiversity.

Demand for meat and milk products remains high in industrialized countries and is growing in the developing countries: Since 1980, the number of pigs and poultry has increased fourfold and that of ruminants (sheep, cattle etc.) has doubled. The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) predicts the meat production to double and an 80 % increase of dairy production by 2050 if current trends persist.

This demand cannot be met using sustainable production methods – probably not even using current factory style farms – because of competition in land use. The inhabitants of industrialized countries must start to reduce their daily intake of meat and dairy products now, for many good reasons:

### **Stop eating our planet and the climate!**

#### **1. Factory farming is not sustainable**

Feed crop cultivation is next to gaining grazing land for beef cattle the main driver of deforestation/change of land use. High consumption of chemical fertilizers and pesticides as well as water usage put additional strain on nature and resources. Purine from

factory farms is responsible for soil and air pollution as well as the eutrophication of rivers, lakes and oceans. Its high greenhouse gas emissions (methane, nitrous oxide and CO<sub>2</sub>) drive climate change, whilst ammonia emissions cause acidification of soils and water bodies (acid rain). Huge GM soy and corn monocultures (feed crops) need increasing amounts of pesticides and exacerbate the already dramatic loss of biodiversity.

## **2. Factory farming is not efficient**

According to the FAO, an estimated 33 % of the world's entire cereal harvest is used as livestock feed. But the conversion of plant proteins into animal proteins is poor: For each kg of beef you need 10 kg of feed (for pork the ratio is 4–5 kg per kg pork meat, for chicken it is 2–3 kg: 1 kg of meat). 90 % of the world soy production is already being used for livestock feed, prolonging inefficiently the food chain. Factory farming also destroys rural employment and economies.

## **3. Factory farming is not fair**

The burden of problems and costs caused by it are forced upon all taxpayers, whilst earnings are private gains for the companies. Taxpayers pay threefold for meat and dairy products: Through direct payments and export subsidies (CAP), for the clean-up or suffering from a degraded environment, climate change effects etc. and a third time in the store when buying their food. Developing countries with large parts of their populations still suffering from hunger (especially in South America and Africa) witness an ever increasing concentration of arable land in the hands of very few owners – sometimes even foreign entities – who only grow cash crops for export instead of feeding nationals with traditional crops.

## **4. Factory farming is not healthy**

The breeding of hybrid farm animal species was focussed for years entirely on productivity criteria. And animals in factory farms are raised without sufficient space to move or live out their natural behavior. They often suffer from lameness, deformities etc. and are more prone to illnesses than robust old races in free range keeping. Furthermore, according to WHO findings, the overconsumption of meat and dairy products is one of the main causes of obesity and overweight as well as “modern” diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some types of cancer in humans. A report published in the famous medical journal *The Lancet* proposes that inhabitants of developed countries should cut their meat consumption to 90 g per day (max. 50 g of red meat). Currently, “Westerners” eat their own body weight in meat each year: on average 224 g per day!

## **5. Factory farming is not ethical**

Animals suffer throughout their lives, always confined to stables, never going outside except for slaughter. They are crammed in with poor lighting conditions and no envi-

ronmental enhancement. Many become aggressive (feather pecking, tail biting etc.) because they are not able to live out their natural instincts. Cheap mass production has also frequently lead to subsidized exports of excess production. Such unfair competition destroys emerging local markets in developing countries.

**That's why PROVIEH calls for a change in the Common Agricultural Policy and towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns in industrialized countries in general! So please act now: Reduce your own meat and dairy intake and help us to introduce sustainable production and consumption patterns into the discussion and strategies concerning climate change mitigation wherever you have the opportunity to do so.**

**The potential is great – each person can save 196 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> just by introducing one meat free "veggie day" per week into their diet!**