

SEPTEMBER 2012

**FACTORY
FARMING**

JASON SMITH



MOTION:

**“FACTORY FARMING
IS NECESSARY”**

**DEBATING MATTERS
TOPIC
GUIDES**

www.debatingmatters.com

wellcometrust
Strategic Award

PRIMARY FUNDER



HEADLINE SPONSOR

LLOYDS
SCHOLARS

TOPIC GUIDE SPONSORS

THINK BIG. THEN THINK BIGGER.

Lloyds Scholars is a unique social mobility programme run by Lloyds Banking Group. Partnering with leading universities across the UK, we offer students from lower income households a complete package of financial support, paid internships, a business mentor and the opportunity to develop their employability skills.

For more information visit:

 www.lloyds-scholars.com  @LloydsScholars



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

CONTENTS

Introduction

Key terms

The factory farming debate in context

Essential reading

Backgrounders

In the news

KEY TERMS

[Anaerobic Digester](#)

[Battery Cages](#)

[Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations \(CAFO\)](#)

[Farrowing Crates](#)

[Green Revolution](#)

[Surface runoff](#)

[Western-style diet](#)

INTRODUCTION

1 of 6

NOTES

1
1
2
4
5
6

“The world wants to imagine that it’s a lot more idyllic than it actually is” says Mike Mack, chief executive of the agricultural chemicals and seeds giant Syngenta about contemporary attitudes to agriculture and farming. This outlook, some argue, is the cause of the difficulties we face with regards to feeding a growing global population [Ref: [The Times](#)]. Those who argue against the increased industrialisation and intensification of agriculture and farming suggest a change in our attitudes toward animals and the environment must take precedence over bringing Western levels of consumption to the rest of the world, and of corporate profits [Ref: [CIWF](#)]. In the UK this disagreement has recently been aired through protests against two proposed intensive farms units: a pig farm in Derbyshire which planned to raise 100,000 pigs a year; and a 8,100 cow mega-dairy in Lincolnshire, both of which were described by opponents as inhumane, environmentally disastrous and an unnatural way to produce food [Ref: [Ecologist](#)]. The Observer food columnist, Jay Rayner, agrees that factory farms can be an ugly business but argues that most people want and need cheap food and cannot afford to develop middle-class ‘foodie’ obsessions that many of the arguments against intensive agriculture represent [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. Whilst some are willing to overlook the concerns raised by protesters, others see a much broader problem. The current trajectory of farming, argues renowned philosopher Peter Singer, represents society’s moral decay as we choose to treat animals and the environment unethically [Ref: [Minnesota Daily](#)]. Others, like Peter Kendall, the president of the National Farmers Union, suggest that emotive arguments against increased productivity in the agricultural sector are a consequence not of concern for animal welfare, but of ignorance [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. Larger farms, it’s argued, are best placed to increase animal welfare standards, protect the environment and sustain the world’s population [Ref: [Global Harvest Initiative](#)].



Animal Welfare

Opponents of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) or factory farms, claim that animal welfare standards are lower on these farms than on conventional ones [Ref: [Daily Mail](#)]. Intensive farming treats livestock as machines on a production line, breeding chickens that display psychological damage, pigs contained in pens where they do not have enough room to turn around [Ref: [WSPA](#)] and dairy cows that are milked at an unnatural rate and live shorter lives as a consequence [Ref: [CIWF](#)]. Dr. Temple Grandin, Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University, has described conditions on modern pig farms as, “like being stuffed into the middle seat of a jam-packed jumbo jet for your whole adult life, and you’re not ever allowed out in the aisle” [Ref: [Ecologist](#)]. Others counter that although some farming practices can appear cruel and unnecessary there are good reasons for doing so and such practices are common on farms of all sizes. Farrowing crates, for example, restrict the movement of a pregnant sow for welfare reasons as she may easily kill the piglets to which she is giving birth simply by moving and crushing them to death, and therefore the welfare of the animals is paramount [Ref: [UK Agriculture](#)]. In addition, larger farms are able to employ full-time vets who care for livestock around the clock which is impossible on smaller, traditional farms [Ref: [Innovation Centre for US Dairy](#)]. However, opponents argue that constant veterinary attention is only necessary because of the problems caused to animals by being raised in intensive units and the intensive use of unnecessary antibiotics [Ref: [Der Spiegel](#)].

Environment issues

According to the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) report, ‘Livestock’s Long Shadow’, the livestock sector generates 65 percent of human-related nitrous oxide, 37 percent of all human-induced methane and 64 percent of ammonia, which contributes significantly to acid rain [Ref: [FAO](#)]. The major polluting agents are animal wastes, antibiotics and hormones, chemicals from tanneries, fertilizers and the pesticides used to spray feed crops [Ref: [FAO](#)]. These contaminate the water supply, cause soil erosion and endanger human health, although critics, have argued the report is full of errors and its claims are fallacy [Ref: [ILRI](#)]. So the potential ‘unforeseen consequences’ of large scale agriculture raises concerns but technological development, it’s suggested, is the practical solution to overcoming these objections with innovations such as anaerobic digesters, which allow farms to avoid the potential controversial practice of muck spreading and the resulting runoff which can pollute streams and rivers [Ref: [Too Much Slurry](#)]. But these technologically advanced solutions are only likely to be available on larger farms with a much higher income to invest in new technologies [Ref: [Energy Justice Network](#)]. Whilst some critics of factory farming can see the benefit of technological innovation within the industry, they argue factory farms are just going in the wrong direction as they treat food production in the same way as industrial production, such as making a car on a production line [Ref: [VIVA](#)]. The modern dairy cow is a case in point, they argue: with its engorged and cumbersome udder, developed through decades of industrial breeding, the dairy cow been reduced to a mere machine. All but five percent of the 280 million hens in the US



THE FACTORY FARMING DEBATE IN CONTEXT CONTINUED...

3 of 6

NOTES

egg-laying flock are raised in battery cages with each bird having a living space smaller than a single sheet of letter-sized paper. In this argument, technological innovation is part of the problem, and we should consider a return to older, more traditional ways of farming [Ref: [Worldwatch Institute](#)].

However, others agree that factory farming may be efficient but ask, ultimately, is it right? [Ref: [Minnesota Daily](#)].

Feeding the planet

While many argue that intensive production is the only way to feed the world efficiently others counter that small-scale local initiatives are best [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. Organic farms and even household allotments are seen as an alternative method of feeding ourselves ethically and cheaply [Ref: [spiked](#)]. Opponents argue that such alternatives are not really alternatives at all, with the global livestock sector providing livelihoods to roughly 1.3 billion people around the world [Ref: [Royal Society of Biological Sciences](#)] and if society wants to reduce the amount of land given over to farming in order to protect the environment, then larger, more intensive farms are the way forward as small traditional farm holdings contribute relatively little to overall food stocks [Ref: [Peak Energy](#)]. The growth of a Western-style, high protein diet, in China and other emerging economies, means more food needs to be produced efficiently [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. Agriculture operates in a world market and on a global scale [Ref: [USDA](#)] and farms must produce food ever more efficiently in order to be competitive. The application of science to farming has had spectacular results since the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. For example, between 1950 and 2000 the number of dairy cows in the United States fell by more than 50 per cent, yet during that same period the average annual milk yield more than tripled [Ref: [CQ Researcher](#)].



ESSENTIAL READING

Factory Farms

Congressional Quarterly, Volume 17, Number 2 12 January 2007

What's the Future of Food?

spiked in association with the UK Food and Drink Federation

FOR

Giving the world the tools to feed itself

Chris Johnston *The Times* 9 July 2012

Intensive farming may ease climate change

Jeff Tollefson *Nature* 15 June 2010

The Omnivore's Delusion: Against the Agri-intellectuals

Blake Hurst *The American* 30 July 2009

Sure, it might be cruel, but intensive farming saves lives

Jay Rayner *Observer* 13 January 2008

'Only intensive farming' will feed Britain

David Adam *Guardian* 18 April 2007

AGAINST

Farmers must take better care of our countryside

Louise Gray *Telegraph* 9 January 2012

We should all have a beef with factory farming

Geoffrey Lean *Telegraph* 3 June 2011

Overuse of drugs in animal farming linked to growing antibiotic-resistance in humans

Tom Levitt *Ecologist* 23 May 2011

Cheap meat comes at a high price

Tracy Worcester *New Statesman* 9 March 2011

The pigs' revenge

Felicity Lawrence *Guardian* 2 May 2009

IN DEPTH

Intensive farming 'massively slowed' global warming

Andy Coghlan *New Scientist* 14 June 2012

How can we feed the world and still save the planet?

Madeleine Bunting *Guardian* 21 January 2012

World hunger best cured by small-scale agriculture: report

Nidhi Prakash *Guardian* 13 January 2012

In praise of factory farming

Dan Murphy *Dairy Herd Network* 22 June 2011

Global Food crisis: The challenge of changing diets

Richard King *Guardian* 1 June 2011

The Mr Bigs of farming leave a barren legacy

Charles Clover *The Sunday Times* 12 July 2009

Who gives a cluck about broiler a chicken

Justine Brian *spiked* 8 January 2008

What is factory farming

Tony Wardle *Vegetarians International Voice for Animals*

4 of 6

NOTES



BACKGROUNDEERS

Tonight: The Food We Eat

ITV1 24 August 2012

You Eat What you Are

Stephen J. Dubner *Freakonomics* 6 July 2012

Look what happens on a diet of platitudes

AA Gill *The Sunday Times* 24 June 2012

Super farms are needed in UK, says leader of National Farmers Union

Guardian 5 June 2012

How to Make the Food System More Energy Efficient

Michael E. Webber *Scientific American* 29 December 2011

Revealed: the secret horror of the world's 'mega' factory farms

Ecologist 5 November 2011

So what does the EU think farming is for?

Clive Aslet *Telegraph* 12 October 2011

Foston Pig Prison Protest

Vegetarians International Voice for Animals (VIVA) 18 May 2011

The Future of Food and Farming

Foresight Report *The Government Office for Science* 2011

Global Food Security Strategic Plan 2011-2016

Global Food Security 2011

Opinion on the Welfare of the Dairy Cow Farm

Animal Welfare Council October 2009

Factory Farming: A Moral Issue

Peter Singer *Minnesota Daily* 22 March 2006

Can Organic Farming Feed Us All?

Brian Halweil *Worldwatch Institute*

Modern Agriculture and its Benefits - Trends, Implications and Outlook

Dr William C Motes *Global Harvest Initiative*

Pig Business

Farms not Factories

Anaerobic Digesters: video

United States Dept. Of Agricultural: Data and Statistics Economic Research Service

An introduction to farm animals

Compassion in World Farming

ORGANISATIONS

Compassion in World Farming (CIWF)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)

Food and Drink Federation (FDA)

Innovation Centre for US Dairy

International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)

National Farmers Union (NFU)

Royal Society of Biological Sciences

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Vegetarians International Voice for Animals (VIVA)

World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)

5 of 6

NOTES



IN THE NEWS

6 of 6

NOTES

Don't buy milk from Morrisons, Aldi, Lidl or Londis, say dairy farmers

Guardian 27 July 2012

Farmers win milk price rise after dairy blockades

The Times 21 July 2012

Cuts in milk prices will cause rise to consumers, say farming leaders

Independent 11 July 2012

Government 'should look to farming to kick-start economy' as agriculture yields 10,000 new jobs

Daily Mail 30 December 2011

Antimicrobials: Science focus needed in battle against resistance

Farmers Guardian 25 November 2011

Debate rages on over large-scale dairy farms

Farmers Weekly 16 September 2011

Plans for super-dairy with 4,000 cows are axed after 'battery farming' row

Daily Mail 17 February 2011

The truth about 'British' pork... that comes all the way from a Polish factory farm

Daily Mail 17 January 2009

Battery hens healthier than free-range chickens, study claims

Telegraph 15 January 2009



ABOUT DEBATING MATTERS

Debating Matters because ideas matter. This is the premise of the Institute of Ideas & Pfizer Debating Matters Competition for sixth form students which emphasises substance, not just style, and the importance of taking ideas seriously. Debating Matters presents schools with an innovative and engaging approach to debating, where the real-world debates and a challenging format, including panel judges who engage with the students, appeal to students from a wide range of backgrounds, including schools with a long tradition of debating and those with none.

DEBATING MATTERS
**TOPIC
GUIDES**

www.debatingmatters.com

FIND OUT MORE

Debating Matters engages a wide range of individuals, from the students who take part in the debates, the diverse group of professionals who judge for us, the teachers who train and support their debaters, and the young people who go on to become Debating Matters Alumni after school and help us to continue to expand and develop the competition. If you enjoyed using this Topic Guide, and are interested in finding out more about Debating Matters and how you can be involved, please complete this form and return it to us at the address below.

Debating Matters Competition
Academy of Ideas Ltd
Signet House
49-51 Farringdon Road
London
EC1M 3JP

- Yes, I'd like to know more. Please send me further information about the Debating Matters Competition:
- I am a teacher and would like further details about events in my area and how to enter a team
- I am a sixth form student and would like further details about events in my area
- I am interested in becoming a Debating Matters judge
- I am interested in sponsoring/supporting Debating Matters
- Other (please specify)

First name

Surname

School/company/
organisation

Professional role
(if applicable)

Address

Postcode

Email address

School/work phone

Mobile phone

**“TEENAGE CITIZENS
THINKING DEEPLY
ABOUT...SOCIAL
ISSUES”**

IAN GRANT, CEO, BRITANNICA

**DEBATING MATTERS
TOPIC
GUIDES**

www.debatingmatters.com