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Eating well for a fuller future

Eating is not just a physiological act by an individual, it is also an action that carries great social and environmental weight. Today, our protein-rich diet, which is sustained by animals fed within an intensive, low-cost meat and fish industry, has significant impacts on the planet, our health, other countries and animal welfare.

The data is clear: if we want to have a healthy, sustainable diet, we do not need to consume more than 20 kg of meat ([1](#)). Considering that the average person in Spain eats about 50 kg of meat every year, we ought to cut our meat intake by more than half.

What would be the consequences of not cutting down on meat?

Poor health. The correlation between the consumption of red and processed meats with cases of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and different types of cancers is well known.[\(2\)](#) But there is more to it. The meat industry stuffs animals with antibiotics, which causes antibiotic-resistant bacteria to develop. These bacteria, in turn, get passed onto humans. This abusive practice and its inherent risks to public health is so great that the World Health Organisation has called for it to be banned for animals destined for human consumption. It is a huge challenge given that 84% of antibiotics used in Spain end up being fed to livestock.

Diminished animal welfare and rights. Only in Spain can you find more pigs slaughtered than there are people living in the country, and more poultry butchered than there are inhabitants of the European Union. This mass use of animals by an industry dominated by large corporations prevents animals from receiving minimal care during their rearing, transport and slaughter as set out under European law. From the abattoir to the supermarket, these animals are not recognised as sentient beings with rights but as mere objects and merchandise.

More climate change and deforestation. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the livestock industry has one of the largest impacts on climate change: 15% of greenhouse gases emitted throughout the world comes from this sector. Moreover, animal protein requires ten times more hectares for its production than plant protein, leading to serious deforestation, as in the Amazon, and a loss of biodiversity overall. This goes against all logic: if the food crops used to feed the animals were in fact redirected for human consumption, four billion more people in the world could be fed.

Fewer labour rights and jobs. The working conditions in the slaughterhouses, which are mostly operated

on a subcontracted basis, are horrendous; there is little job security but plenty of psychological stress. As if that were not enough, the unregulated development of mechanised industrial farming has been destroying employment in the rural world. There are four times fewer jobs in these intensive farming complexes than on small farms! While our meat products are exported, the social toll remains on us.

Continuing along this low-cost food path places people at jeopardy and causes irreparable harm to living beings. The 6 alternative to this trajectory is a **transition towards a new farming model** that prioritises the environmentally friendly production of plant proteins and, by halving meat consumption, extensive, organic stockbreeding that is local. This means fighting industrial farming in earnest, a key piece in the dominant agricultural complex which is destroying the rural world, and thoroughly revising the Common Agricultural Policy in order to transform it into a tool directed towards environmentally friendly agriculture and small farming.

In addition, let's use our influence **as consumers and favour our Mediterranean diet**, which is much better for the climate [\(3\)](#) and places plant proteins over animal proteins. In this sense, we can and should, both socially and financially, incentivise the consumption of vegetables, the use of urban gardens, buyer groups, the labelling of plant proteins, local restaurants guides offering plant proteinbased menus and even healthy and sustainable food for our children in school canteens.

Beyond the necessary changes to everyday personal habits, these actions should be performed collectively. The increasing number of citizens **who want to eat better and more responsibly** have in their grasp a way to set aside low-cost food and opt for quality nourishment.

In order to reach these cross-sectional goals, we need the strategic and practical coordination of a broad, pluralist and multidisciplinary network that also includes a wide swathe of society in favour of climate stability, a healthy diet, global justice and animal welfare. In this report, we have combined the analyses and complementary proposals of various people and organisations from the social, agricultural and institutional fields: ecologists, animal welfare advocates, nutritionists, veterinarians, as well as consumer bodies, development agencies and extensive, environmental stockbreeders. Within this mutual vision, the authors contribute their perspectives and criticisms of today's agri-food system, as well as genuine proposals for reducing meat consumption and supporting the 'eating well for a fuller life' concept.

We hope this cross-sectional, pluralist and multidisciplinary network provides a common, inspirational base for improving the climate, human health, global solidarity and animal welfare.

Florent Marcellesi
MEP for EQUO/Primavera Europa

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