



# Farmageddon: The True Cost of Cheap Meat

*Philip Lymbery , Isabel Oakeshott*

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## **Farmageddon: The True Cost of Cheap Meat** Philip Lymbery , Isabel Oakeshott

Farm animals have been disappearing from our fields as the production of food has become a global industry. We no longer know for certain what is entering the food chain and what we are eating – as the UK horsemeat scandal demonstrated. We are reaching a tipping point as the farming revolution threatens our countryside, health and the quality of our food wherever we live in the world.

\* Our health is under threat: half of all antibiotics used worldwide (rising to 80 per cent in US) are routinely given to industrially farmed animals, contributing to the emergence of deadly antibiotic-resistant superbugs

\* Wildlife is being systematically destroyed: bees are now trucked across the States (and even airfreighted from Australia) to pollinate the fruit trees in the vast orchards of California, where a chemical assault has decimated the wild insect population

\* Cereals that could feed billions of people are being given to animals: soya and grain that could nourish the world's poorest, are now grown increasingly as animal fodder

*Farmageddon* is a fascinating and terrifying investigative journey behind the closed doors of a runaway industry across the world – from the UK, Europe and the USA, to China, Argentina, Peru and Mexico. It is both a wake-up call to change our current food production and eating practices and an attempt to find a way to a better farming future.

## **Farmageddon: The True Cost of Cheap Meat Details**

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# From Reader Review Farmageddon: The True Cost of Cheap Meat for online ebook

## Lyn says

A terrifying expose of the state of industrialized farming - crops, fish, animals - and the environmental degradation, endless abuse and cycle of waste throughout the system. Animals who could eat food we can't e.g. grass, locked up in cages and fed crops grown thousands of miles away; the problem of pollution of land and water from factory farm manure; the smashing of peasant farmers' work and lives in many countries in order for large corporations to grow GM crops, soy, corn for animal feed; and much much more. Everybody, meat eater and vegetarian, should read this book - the suffering, human and animal, caused by industrialized farming is a massive environmental and ethical problem and cannot even be justified, as is often attempted, on the grounds that it feeds the hungry. It doesn't. The poor get poorer and more and more small farmers are forced into poverty and inability to feed themselves or their communities. Over a billion animals a week are sent to their deaths; mostly after living a short and brutalized life. The earth is awash in a sea of animal blood. Please read this book and take action.

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## Sean Goh says

A very level-headed description of the modern factory farming juggernaut, covering both land and sea (bet you didn't know about aquaculture!). Lymbery thankfully leaves out exhortations to go vegan, being content to advise us all to simply become more conscious of what we put into our mouths everyday.

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With indiscriminate spraying of pesticides and destruction of varied habitats by monocultures, local bee populations have gone into decline, leading to the rise of industrialised pollination, with millions of bees shipped to California from across the country, or even across seas (Australia).

Around 100 billion farmed fish are produced globally each year, about 30 billion more than pigs cows and chickens and other terrestrial farm animals combined. By volume of flesh aquaculture produces 70% of the 80 million tonnes of chicken produced worldwide.

"It is hard to see how this would be acceptable to Western consumers (feeding chicken muck to farmed fish). I suppose it would depend how much they were allowed to know."

"It is a true saying that when you buy a Scottish salmon you pay for bullets to shoot seals."

Fishmeal is one of the dirtiest secrets of the factory-farming industry, an environmental catastrophe that involves sucking millions of tonnes of small fish out of the sea and crushing them into fish oil and dry feed for farmed fish, pigs and chickens. The process deprives millions of larger wild fish, birds and marine mammals of their natural prey, drastically depleting stocks of important species. It also diverts what could be a highly valuable source of nutrition for people to industrially farmed animals.

There is a darker side to the veterinary profession, rarely seen by those working outside the industry. A growing army of vets work on factory farms to ensure the animals are kept alive long enough for profitable

slaughter or ensure they continue churning out enough milk or eggs to justify their existence, then dispatch them with as little ado as possible.

It seems there is an inbuilt bias towards intensive farming in the vet profession, hardly surprisingly, perhaps, given that it provides so much employment.

In the complex moral maze presenting by farming on land or at sea, it is easy to get lost in the profit bottom line: to lose sight of the patients (animals) when dealing with the customer (farmers).

It is not the scale of the operation, but the nature of the operation. Small backyard farms in China can be as awful as any mega-operation. It is when farming becomes divorced from the land that problems are far more likely to arise.

Rather than take the one-dimensional view that business is the cause of the problem, the author sees business as a key component in achieving change from the industrial model that has gone too far down the track of putting profit before feeding people properly.

The National Health Service is the largest publicly funded health service on the planet and employs a staggering 1.7 million people. said to be second only to the massed ranks of employees of Walmart, the Chinese army and the Indian railway.

A key element in the spread of diseases originating on farms is long-distance transport of animals for fattening and slaughter. As well as being a major welfare issue, it allows diseases to hitchhike their way to new places and populations.

Any protection animals get from being reared indoors is far outweighed by the health risks associated with being in such a confined and artificial environment.

"The intensification of animal farming has virtually destroyed the nutritional quality of our food." The amount of fat found in a serving of meat is highly dependent upon the feeding regimen. There is strong evidence that animals kept in higher-welfare conditions provide more nutritious food.

The conversion of potential human food into meat in factory farms remains fundamentally inefficient, more go in than come out. Previously, when ruminants like cows ate grass the conversion rate didn't matter, because the animals weren't competing with humans for food. Similarly, pigs and poultry ate scraps and leftovers to forage.

A third of the world's cropland is devoted to growing feed for animals. Whatever space 'saved' by intensive farming is countered by the expansion of farmland to feed those animals which can't feed themselves.

"I don't think the rancher we met was a bad man. Like so many of the people I have met in the factory-farming business, he struck me as just another enterprising but ultimately misguided individual trying to make money from a bad system."

Conventional crop production in America swallows up the equivalent of 6.3 barrels of oil per hectare. 2/3 of this is used for petrochemicals like fertilisers, pesticides and other inputs. That is why farmers are often at the forefront of fuel protests. Oil price rises hit them hard.

Food poverty is largely found in rural areas, while factory farming is geared towards feeding cities. In developing countries it provides the poor with a double whammy, failing to provide them with affordable food and denying them the opportunity to grow food to sell to their urban cousins.

The trouble with consumer power is that it is limited by lack of information, and vested interests work hard to keep people in the dark, shielding them from the often ugly truth about how meat and dairy products are produced. Of course many prefer not to know, but an increasing number want to make informed choices, which is why labeling remains so important.

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### **Annemarie Ijkema says**

horrifying what happens to create so called food. go vegan!

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### **Zade says**

I was hesitant to read this book because I figured it would be an anti-meat screed from a radical animal rights activist, ala PETA. As an omnivore and someone who has raised and eaten her own chickens, I don't care if someone else is vegan, but I have no sympathy for those who oppose "violence against animals" by violently imposing their own views on other humans. I also believe in listening to people who are different to myself, so I gave Lymbery's book a go. And I am so very, very glad I did.

Despite my early misgivings, Lymbery is no radical vegan activist. He's an activist for humane treatment of animals, to be sure, but he's also even-handed, logical, and extremely cogent in his presentation. The essential argument of the book is that farm animals need not be raised in inhumane conditions and that the current system of doing so (concentrated animal feeding operations, vast battery-cage chicken "farms," intensive sea farming of fish, etc.) is neither good for human health nor effective in providing reasonably-priced food for a sufficient number of people. Lymbery demonstrates, step by devastating step, how truly expensive our current methods of raising meat truly are. By the time one adds in monoculture crops of GMO grains for animal feed, transportation, chemical fertilizers, medications, and growth agents, industrial infrastructure and its maintenance--never mind the decreased nutritional value of the food and the increased risk of super-bug creation and infection--it is shockingly clear that without the subsidies that keep food cheap, none of us would be able to afford meat at all under the current model.

Lymbery is not just criticizing, however. He offers concrete suggestions for alternate ways of producing and consuming meat, as well as steps readers can take right now both to improve their own health and enjoyment and to support sustainable, humane husbandry of food animals. This hopeful, can-do approach is a welcome change from all the "meat is murder" negativity and absolutist rhetoric one so often finds in books on this topic.

There is a ton of information in this book, but the facts and figures never become overwhelming because Lymbery incorporates them into narrative accounts of his own travels and the lives of real people from countries all over the world. He has a knack for making statistics into stories that connect to the reader in a very human and even personal way. In the end, the reader feels not lectured to, but rather like s/he's had a very intense, very interesting conversation with a friend.

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### **Johanna says**

4.5 ?? firstly this isn't a pro veggie/vegan book or a read solely focussed on animal welfare, albeit welfare

can't be ignored when it comes to factory farming, this is a book that exposes the eye opening reality of industrial farming and the perils of how we are currently feeding the world and ultimately starving it. If this continues we won't have enough food to feed the world (we're already running out) by 2050!

It's pretty much a wake up call for the need to change our current food production which is no longer sustainable for feeding the global population, our environment or our health.

Lymbery's investigative journey through this industry is downright remarkable. Exposing each and every truth about how our current food production is killing our planet, health and the quality of our food. With fascinating insights on every page e.g did you know that 50% of the world's antibiotics is routinely given to industrial farmed animals (the means by which most meat, dairy and eggs enter our food chain) which in turn is resulting in the emergence of antibiotic resistant superbugs! This is one of the many mind blowing facts I learned with each turn of the page, in this punchy fast read.

This delivers the kind of information that many people prefer not to know, but when we no longer know for certain what we are eating and the impact our food consumption is having on the world, ignorance is no longer bliss. This book, as was quite rightly said, "demands reading and deserves the wisest possible audiences" (Joanna Lumley)

Only when we know the truth can we make informed choices as a consumer and use our power as the consumer to stop the ecological meltdown that's taking place.

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### **Gina says**

It gives you hundreds of reasons to go organic and think twice about food choices... Very well written.

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### **Martin Empson says**

Farmageddon was a informative, scary and inspiring read. There's much to get one's teeth into here. But I also had criticisms, particularly I thought the book failed to challenge the major problem with agriculture in the 21st century - that the system is geared towards profit, not feeding people. My full, critical, but supportive review is here: <http://resolutereader.blogspot.co.uk/...>

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### **Alison says**

'Farmageddon' is a thought-provoking and very readable account of what is going on in the farming industry worldwide and how that not only has consequences for the animals but also for all of us. I have to be honest, I have a lot more respect for livestock farmers than I do for the majority of meat eaters who pop into the supermarket, buy a £2.99 chicken for dinner and don't for one second think about how that chicken was raised and killed so cheaply. The type of people who put their fingers in their ears and don't want to know where their food comes from. People seem to still believe that pigs and cows and sheep and chickens all live on Old MacDonald's farm, happily chomping away at grass in the fields or pecking in the farmyard, despite all the evidence that's now available to the contrary.

The consequences of humanity's reliance on meat are far-reaching and potentially devastating. This book

explores in a thoughtful and intelligent way the disasters that have already been caused by our appetite for cheap meat - the decline in the number of birds, for example (in the last forty years the population of tree sparrows, grey partridges and skylarks, among others, have plummeted), the threat to bees, and the pollution caused by the need to get rid of the huge amounts of waste produced by the millions and millions now being farmed.

I know from experience that people don't want to be preached at - and this book isn't preachy at all. The author isn't trying to make you vegan - he is just telling you what he has seen, from China to the US, to South America and though Europe, and gives options and alternatives that could see an end to the suffering of those millions of animals (and they do suffer) and better health and a better environment for everyone. This book is, in my opinion, an absolute must read. It isn't always comfortable reading, but it's time we pulled our fingers out of our ears.

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## **The Book says**

Holy cow. (Sorry, bad pun, couldn't resist.) This book is TERRIFYING. I watched Food, Inc and then wanted to explore the topic of agriculture and intensive farming further, so picked this up. Scared the crap out of me.

This book is about a system which doesn't work and is destroying people, animals and ultimately, the planet. It's depleting fresh water supplies, destroying rainforests to create crop lands to grown animal feed, polluting the planet to such an extent that 'dead zones' are being created in the oceans where nothing can survive, not to mention giving people all kinds of health problems - and then of course, there are the miserable condition of the animals being bred and the meat and dairy products produced from those animals. None of it makes any real sense, but the agriculture industry players are pushing to create more and more of a broken system, while hiding what they're doing from consumers. Great.

I was recently asked 'What are you going to do in 201 to make the world a better place?' I didn't know at the time, but now I know that in 2015 I'm going to make an effort to change my food consumption and purchasing habits. I'm going to look to buy locally grown produce, especially organic, grass fed meat and dairy products in place of cheap, grain fed, intensively reared supermarket meat. I'll be voting with my cash.

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## **Seamus Enright says**

Excellent, lucid account of how modern factory farming harms animals, humans and the environment alike.

It's full of data and anecdotes and very readable. Much of the information will be familiar to people who take an interest in the subject though I learned new things as well.

Some of the stuff in there is truly shocking...like an account of 5 people who drowned in a pool of pig excrement, and how Chinese farmers pumped steroids into pigs rather than give them space to walk around.

It ends on a note of optimism that a combination of geo-engineering and a return to a more balanced diet and

way of farming can solve the enormous problems factory farming has caused.

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### **Martin Rowe says**

After a rocky rhetorical start, FARMAGEDDON picks up steam and weight as the genial and modest Philip Lymbery sets off on a round-the-world trip to visit Concentrated Animal Feedings Operations (CAFOs), the areas of commodity crops that make those operations possible, and an "ideal" farm. Lymbery's message isn't vegetarian/vegan: his aim, as well as that of the organization he runs—Compassion in World Farming—is to get land animals out of the concrete and ammonia-filled hellholes that 99 percent find themselves in and back on the land and in the fresh air where they belong. The book's strengths lie in vivid (and disgusting) descriptions of CAFOs, fish farms, and the related horrors that attend them—environmental dead zones, human health crises, monocultures, and the destruction of wildlife. The weakness exists in what he doesn't address: the genuine scalability of outdoor farming given meat-consumption patterns and the greater greenhouse gas emissions of grass-fed beef. Nonetheless, as a case for greater farmed-animal welfare, FARMAGEDDON is a well-researched, readable, and comprehensive analysis.

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### **Ndlela Ntuli says**

It is amazing how much I can tell you about computers but when it comes to things that go through my mouth ... very little. I took so much for granted till I read the book. For the most part it is a depressing read but you cannot stop as, i guess it is human nature, i wanted to know how bad does it get. Read this book, you will never look at food the same again.

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### **Melissa says**

This is a moderate book about the harm caused by factory farming on the planet, people's health, and the animals. I say it is "moderate" because the author is not a vegetarian or a vegan, and advocates for purchasing meat from more sustainable, local sources. He does also suggest, although very little, eating less meat. So this is a book for people who don't know much about this topic, and I think it would be a great help to them.

As for me, I know a great deal about this topic, and I do not eat any animals or their bodily secretions (dairy, eggs, etc). To me, this solution is so obvious and I can't understand not being willing to even try it, say, for a month. Just try it. It's not that hard. You form new habits. Then you don't have to worry about spending a fortune on "sustainable" animal body parts and you can be sure that you're causing the minimal amount of suffering to animals that is possible in this imperfect world. But such sane suggestions are for a different book. This book is not made for people as principled as myself.

That said, it's a good book. Do you want to know about pig excrement and the enormous amount of it in poisonous lagoons all over the world? Do you want to know how chickens suffer from not being able to stretch and being made to stand on their sensitive feet in wire cages so their eggs can fall through and roll down to factory workers who are practically slaves? Do you want to know about how animal agriculture is using cloning technology to create even more grotesquely miserable and unhealthy but profitable animals? Do you want to know about how animal agriculture is a main driver of both droughts and floods? Do you



want to know about how the outrageous overuse of antibiotics to prevent sickness from sweeping through overcrowded sheds full of animals is creating antibiotic-resistant bacteria that may very well decimate the human population? You should want to know. These topics are no joke. You have a responsibility to learn about them, as an educated, literate person.

The book is very British. Its moderateness and human superiority complex is very British. Just as the British are only somewhat increasingly embarrassed about their colonial past and how they treated places around the world as their personal playground while simultaneously occasionally taking up some social justice issue or other, they talk about animals very similarly. It's basically, "We're better than animals, we can breed them to use their bodies as though they belonged to us and not them, but perhaps we shouldn't do it in such a horrific manner." Well, OK. That's the attitude of a lot of people, and I suppose it's better than the "Who gives a fuck? Fuck the animals, fuck the planet, fuck my grandchildren, I want a cheeseburger" attitude that is also extremely common.

I did like hearing about some of the activism the author was a part of in order to enact changes for animals in England and in the EU. I think it's important for activists to know about each other and what we've done and what has worked and what hasn't.

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### **T P SCRAFTON says**

This book quite simply should be included in the school syllabus, and everybody should be made aware of the truth of industrialized farming practices.

Many people don't like to think where the meat on their table comes from, and perhaps if more people did take an interest, the farming industry would be forced to change radically. This book lays down the consequences of over production covering the environmental cost of an industry motivated by greed and driven by ignorance and cruelty. Lymbery spells out clearly and concisely the issues involved through his extensive research around the world, providing the reader with a compelling body of evidence that cannot be refuted. Buy a copy, read, pass on to a friend.

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### **Anna K?avi?a says**

Lymbery doesn't ask the world to go vegan what he asks is that the farm animals are raised (and eventually slaughtered) with care and compassion.

He also speaks about environmental, economic, ethical and health problems that conventional farming causes.

I wonder why the authors or the publisher didn't add some pictures of modern factory farms and animals. Could it be because often these pictures are distressing to view? Then it's really dumb move as one picture is worth a thousand words.

Here's a link to one of the many videos about the meat industry on YouTube.

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### **Stephanie Jane (Literary Flits) says**

I have been strongly affected by reading Farmageddon. It is a powerful illustration of the short sighted approach taken to food production since the 1950s. I expected most of the book to cover familiar ground as I thought I had a good grasp of the current situation regarding factory farming in the UK. It turns out that I don't!

I was shocked by the degree of illness and disease reported in densely farmed animals. Even farmed salmon, which I buy thinking it is the responsible way to preserve wild stocks, have volumes of lice that are nauseating to consider. I was also amazed to learn about the lack of nutritional value of the resulting meat. Dave and I have noticed our food seeming bland compared to remembered meals in the past, but had assumed it was our tastebuds fading. Apparently this is not the case and the unnaturally speedy growth rates of these animals are the cause. Also, the sheer volume of food and drugs consumed by these animals in their short, unpleasant lives cannot possibly be sustainable, and I don't want my taxes continuing to be spent on subsidising the system.

Fortunately, after all the doom and gloom of animal suffering, ludicrous volumes of waste, destroyed land and rivers, there is a strong message of hope and extensive suggestions for how individual consumers can help to make a real difference. And it's not just Go Veggie either! Realistic advice that we plan to follow includes buying smaller quantities of higher welfare meat. I think the price should then be similar overall and the nutritional content will be higher. Meatfree Mondays is another fun idea for which there are numerous recipe suggestions online (from independent sources, not CIWF).

With regards to the actual writing, I did wonder if the material had originally been conceived as independent essays or lectures because there is a fair amount of overlap to the themed sections. I normally read books cover to cover within a couple of days, but found the repetition too much in this case. Reading a single section then putting Farmageddon aside for a while before returning to it I think is a better approach. The repetition then feels more like reinforcement! Arguments are well made and examples of practices are given from around the world. Most facts are backed up with notes of their sources, although flipping to the back on a Kindle is tedious so I soon gave that up! Nonetheless, I would recommend Farmageddon to pretty much everyone as an eye-opening read.

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### **Sara Kolahdouzan says**

This book has changed the way I think about eating food. It is not pro-vegan/vegetarian, but focuses more on sustainability and thinking about where you get your food from and how it impacts the present and the future. This is the type of thing that should be taught in schools, it's just so fricken important!!! It's well written and full of real-life stories and experiences which make it a fun read.

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### **Sasha says**

some great insights into the book, and some horrible things I never knew about corporate fish farming. It's a collection of insights gathered over a decade or so I was constantly wondering how up to date the

information is. Nevertheless, it's a great overview of the factory farming system and a great companion to the Michael Pollan books.

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### **Stephanie says**

Good book - makes you think more carefully about what you eat but there us a lot of repetitive facts in this book and I think it dies not flow easily. Quite hard to pick back up once you have put down for a while.

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### **A.M.J. Muir says**

Farmageddon came along at exactly the right time for me, when I was reassessing my diet and exercise habits with the goal of increasing my health and fitness levels. One thing that was frustrating me was how little information there is about the food we buy every day in the supermarkets. Though you sometimes know where it came from, there isn't any detail on how it was made, or explanations about what all those terms and ingredients really mean. Farmageddon confronts this knowledge gap face on, discussing how the intensified farming practises that are behind a significant amount of the food on shop shelves is damaging the environment, animals and us.

I already knew how horrendous the meat industry can be, and thought I was reasonably well informed. Reading Farmageddon revealed details that I wasn't aware of, and covered other areas of the farming process not related to meat. Discovering people have died from falling into vats of pig excrement, that vast amounts of antibiotics are fed to animals packed together for profit margins and that companies own the patent on GM seeds so farmers can't reuse the seeds their crops naturally drop; all of this was logical but things I had never consciously considered before.

It also offered a historical perspective on how all this intensified farming came to be, demonstrating how sensible it seemed at one time. By no means does it make farmers the bad guys, but instead shows they are as much a victim of intensified farming practises as consumers. It also does not claim that just because a farm is small or not intensified that it will treat the animals any better. Lymbery makes no bones about the fact that some of the worst places he's seen are small farms.

Written by the now CEO of the charity Compassion in World Farming, it takes a global view but inevitably focuses more on the USA, where farming practises are particularly intensified compared to Europe. The charity have long campaigned for farm animals to be treated respectfully and for their suffering to be as limited as possible, and I like that at no time in the book did I feel that I was being criticised for choosing to eat meat.

Understandably the work of the charity is also a feature of the book but it doesn't feel like an attempt at self promotion or a self-congratulatory monologue. Instead it's a demonstration that no matter how bad practises may be right now, they can get better. Campaigns, consumer pressure and government action can all prevent the disaster that awaits us if we continue to give animals large doses of antibiotics, if we continue feeding crops suitable for humans to animals instead, if we continue to chop down rainforests to make way for those same crops. It's hard not to be convinced by the end of the book that our current push for intensified farming is not sustainable and ultimately self-destructive.

If you care at all about animal welfare this is a must-read. If you care at all about what the food you eat could be doing to you or your family, this is a must-read. The truth is hard to swallow (sorry, couldn't resist) but this is vital information for everyone to know.

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