

# FACTORY FARMING

## UNVEILING THE HIDDEN COSTS

Across Europe, billions of animals are confined in 'factory farms' to be bred or fattened for slaughter and used for human consumption. These industrial facilities often house many thousands of animals in cruel and unnatural conditions, where they suffer overcrowding, mutilations and forced artificial breeding and feeding processes to maximise production.

Animal farming is at the core of the rampant and unsustainable industrialisation of Europe's countryside, causing a number of major interlinked problems. From declining air quality and aquatic 'dead zones' to accelerating risks of zoonotic disease outbreaks and financial burdens on smaller businesses and rural communities, the impacts of how we treat animals are not only harming the animals themselves - they are also posing increasingly severe threats to us all, and the natural world we depend on.

Reducing animal numbers (while allowing more of them back onto Europe's pastures) and embracing more plant-based diets are two simple but vital ways for us to bring Europe's system of animal rearing to a humane, healthy, and safe state. The benefits of such changes at EU level offer hope not only for animals who continue to suffer needlessly, but also for neighbouring communities, rural livelihoods, human health, water quality and availability, and the planet.

What's more, Europeans demand this change, and have expressed that in numerous consultations and European Citizens' Initiatives - with loud calls leading to clear EU commitments to End the Cage Age (supported by 1.4 million EU citizens)!



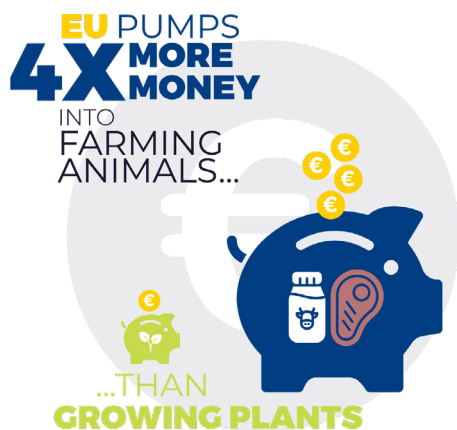




Animal farming causes 93% of the EU's ammonia pollution, costing society an estimate €187 billion. Air quality around factory farms has become intolerable, affecting the health of rural communities, but also devaluing homes, at times by up to 80%.



Factory farming relies on extreme suppression of animals' needs and natural behaviours. Billions are cramped in cages, subjected to mutilations and selective breeding.



75% of animals in the EU are reared in factory farms. Public money is being used to support big agribusinesses at the expense of a more sustainable food system that would benefit farmers, consumers and our ecosystems.

This contamination damages and kills ecosystems, already making water undrinkable in many rural areas across Europe. Livelihoods dependent on fishing and tourism are also being hit hard.

THE ESTIMATED COST OF  
**WATER POLLUTION**



FROM  
**ANIMAL-SOURCED FOOD  
PRODUCTION REACHED**

**€25 billion**

IN 2022 IN THE EU

THE EUROPEAN  
CITIZENS' INITIATIVE (ECI)  
**'END THE CAGE AGE'**




CARRIED THE VOICES OF

**1.4 million**

EU CITIZENS

There is clear, strong support for improved animal welfare from EU citizens across the political spectrum. The latest Eurobarometer on animal welfare (2023) showed 84% of Europeans want to see farmed animals treated better.

Land use change for the production and processing of feed, along with direct methane emissions from ruminants, are the leading sources of those emissions.



**ANIMAL  
FARMING  
CAUSES**

**70%**

OF EU AGRICULTURAL

**GREENHOUSE  
GAS EMISSIONS**

## We therefore call on EU policy-makers to:

**Heed the calls of millions of EU citizens to improve animal welfare across the EU by revising EU Animal welfare legislation to**

- **Improve farming conditions**, by reducing animal stocking densities, phasing out cages, and introducing species-specific welfare standards to ensure humane and scientifically backed living conditions.
- **End cruel practices**, in particular banning routine mutilations and force-feeding, ensuring animals can express natural behaviours without unnecessary suffering. Limit transport suffering.
- **Limit transport suffering within the EU through shorter transport times**, banning the transport of unweaned and pregnant animals, and stricter regulations to prevent prolonged distress.
- **Ban live animal exports** to third countries to prevent exposure to extreme conditions and suffering, favouring meat and genetic material transport instead.
- **End cruel practices at slaughter**, such as ineffective stunning, culling of one-day old chicks and the use of electric prods, paddles and clappers.

**Set a long-term vision and transition pathway for the animal farming sector in a comprehensive Livestock Transition Strategy, which**

- **Starts from an evidence-based diagnosis** of the challenges and setting of objectives rooted in science and independent research.
- **Takes a holistic consideration of sustainability**, addressing environmental and socio-economic challenges on similar footing, as well as ethical and public health aspects.
- **Adopts a territorial approach** in recognition of the heterogeneity of the sector, to ensure its transition to sustainability is adapted to local needs and specificities, to bring it within a safe operating space at EU level and within the carrying capacity of the environment at local level throughout the EU.
- **Supports positive farming practices and seeks to move away from unsustainable models**. High-nature-value farming, such as extensive grazing on semi-natural grasslands and organic farming should be promoted, but the sector cannot hide behind these examples to defend the status quo. Unsustainable models must be acknowledged and supported to transition. Pathways for the extensification of animal rearing in hotspots of pollution are urgently needed.



## **Ensure public funding (in the Common Agricultural Policy and beyond) supports the sustainability transition of the animal farming sector, by**

- **Ending harmful subsidies** for intensive animal rearing. This requires a rapid phase out of coupled income support for intensive livestock and strict environmental safeguards attached to investment support.
- **Increasing funding for voluntary, high-ambition environmental and animal welfare measures**, including for practices such as high-nature value extensive grazing
- **Setting up an Agri-Food Just Transition Fund**, as called for by the Strategic Dialogue, to accompany the transition while leaving no one behind.
- **Ending no-strings-attached crisis support to the animal farming sector**, by making crisis support dependent upon the establishment of a farm transformation plan which identifies the root causes of vulnerabilities and proactively addresses risks and increases resilience.

## **Realise the right of every EU resident to enjoy clean air and water by**

- **Setting binding reduction targets for methane emissions** in the National Emissions Ceiling Directive for the years 2030, 2035 and 2040 and a corresponding revision of the Gothenburg Protocol (to the UNECE Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution Convention).
- **Stepping up the implementation and enforcement** of environmental legislation, to stop the systemic non-compliance of Member States driven by hotspots of industrial livestock production, in particular with regards to the Water Framework Directive and the Nitrates Directive.

## **Make it easier for people to adopt healthy and sustainable diets by**

- **Revising the EU Agri-food Promotion Policy** to align it with sustainability and public health objectives, putting an end to public funding for marketing campaigns that seek to boost the consumption of animal-sourced foods.
- **Developing an EU Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods**, as recommended by the Strategic Dialogue, to boost the consumption of plant-based foods, as part of balanced, healthy and sustainable diets.
- **Updating EU rules on public procurement** to boost Sustainable Food Procurement through minimum mandatory sustainability criteria for public canteens across the EU, including on climate action, organic and other agroecological practices, animal welfare and healthy food.

EEB is Europe's largest network of environmental citizens' organisations with over 185 member organisations in 41 countries, representing some 30 million individual members and supporters. We work for a better future where people and nature thrive together.

EIALP is the first Brussels-based think-and-do tank specializing in animal law & policy, our mission is to advance the interests of animals in the EU. We advocate for animals at EU and national levels and for regulatory reforms to improve the lives of animals and promote a food transition towards more animal-friendly, sustainable and healthier diets.