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Factory Farming: The Hidden Truths

Shelby M. Irons

Valparaiso University, shelby.ironson@valpo.edu

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Factory Farming:
The Hidden Truth

ABSTRACT

It's hard to refute the fact that the concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHG) have skyrocketed over the last 800,000 years. GHGs are comprised of carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, ozone, and fluorocarbons (Barker, 2011). Carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels in the atmosphere have increased by 25% since 1958 (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014). This has caused a rise in the temperature of the Earth's surface over the last three decades, with 2014 deemed the hottest year on record (Kahn, 2015). Human health concerns, rising sea levels, extended fire, tornado, and hurricane seasons, devastating droughts, and widespread deforestation have all been connected to increasing the amount of toxic emissions into the atmosphere (National Climate Assessment Report). Without substantial intervention, these factors will continue to threaten the world's inhabitants of almost 7.3 billion. Factory farming is one of the little known contributors to the climate change phenomena. With population growth on track to double by the year 2050 (World Population), the demand for and consumption of meat and dairy products will substantially increase (Tilman et al, 2011). This will likely cause a major growth in factory farming which, in turn, will negatively impact the amount of GHGs produced. Along with the impact on climate change, factory farming has negative impacts on health and communities, and promotes the inhumane treatment of animals. The detrimental effect of factory farming on the world is one that must be evaluated and action must be taken to regulate this industry.

Factory farms are large farms that do exactly what the term implies: produce meat in large quantities. At present, “nearly 65 billion animals worldwide, including cows, chickens and pigs” are confined to factory farms (Cummins, 2012). “Factory farms dominate U.S. food production, employing abusive practices that maximize agribusiness profits at the expense of the environment, our communities, animal welfare, and even our health” (Factory Farming, 2016). These farms are often very small and the animals are not treated well. “Animals on factory farms are regarded as commodities to be exploited for profit. They undergo painful mutilations and are bred to grow unnaturally fast and large for the purpose of maximizing meat, egg, and milk production for the food industry. Their bodies cannot support this growth, which results in debilitating and painful conditions and deformities” (Factory Farming, 2016).

Factory farming causes more harm than good. These large-scale farms treat animals inhumanely: confining them, electrocuting them, and cruelly slaughtering them even if they are ill or injured. The farms negatively impact communities causing illness and a lesser quality of life for residents living near them. The workers are affected by respiratory illnesses and injuries. The environment is negatively impacted by the release GHGs which is the cause of climate change. Factory farms are not a cheap way to feed our growing population-- not in financial terms or in the repercussions that we will face from their long term operation. The United States, along with the rest of the world, should pass legislature banning the use of harmful chemicals, requiring better, more thorough labeling of our food products and regulating the large operations.