

Fresno Center for Nonviolence March 2023



Dedicated to PEACE and SOCIAL JUSTICE through
SIMPLICITY ~ JUSTICE ~ INCLUSIVENESS ~ NON-INJURY
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To see a more colorful version of our page go to our website.

Nonviolence In the Kitchen by Gerry Bill.

"Decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future."
— [ancient Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) principle]

The Fresno Center
for Nonviolence's
31st Anniversary is
coming soon.



Let us think together about the food we eat. How do the food choices we make affect not just ourselves, but the wellbeing of others—others nearby, others halfway around the world, and others in generations yet to come? Are we doing violence to others because of the ways we eat? We are learning more and more about the environmental impacts of ways that we, as humans, have chosen to feed ourselves. Like it or not, the scientific evidence continues to mount that animal agriculture is placing tremendous stress on our rather fragile planet. Raising animals on an industrial scale has all sorts of negative consequences. There are serious environmental impacts on our water, our air, our land, our climate, and on public health.

OUR WATER - Animal agriculture harms our water supply in two ways. First, animal agriculture consumes water at much higher rates than plant agriculture. Half of all water used in the US is used for animal agriculture. It takes 660 gallons to produce a 1/3-pound beef patty in a hamburger. A slice of bread uses only 11 gallons. All meats consume a lot of water. One pound of chicken uses 518 gallons. Most of the water is used to produce the animal feed.

Second, animal agriculture is a huge polluter of water. Runoff from animal manure contaminates surface water, affecting one third of the rivers in the US. That problem is exacerbated when agricultural land gets flooded (like in the SJ Valley right now!). The pesticides and fertilizers used to produce animal feed get into our ground water, which is a serious public health problem.

OUR AIR - The National Academy of Sciences recently published a study that found that 17,900 deaths in the US per year are linked to air pollution from animal agriculture. By way of comparison, 600 people were killed in mass shootings in 2022. I am not trying to minimize the importance of mass shootings, which many consider to be a serious public health issue. But shouldn't animal agriculture also be addressed as a serious public health issue? A surprisingly large amount of the air pollution is in the form of particulate matter, including the very damaging PM2.5. This is caused by gasses from animal feed and manure that produce particles capable of drifting hundreds of miles. You don't have to live next to a dairy to be at risk.

LAND USE - Half of the world's habitable land is used for agriculture, and a whopping 77% of that is used for animal agriculture. Most of that land use is to provide animal feed. This has become a major cause of deforestation worldwide. It turns out to be a very inefficient use of our land. If one looks at protein production, for example, only about 10% of the protein in the animal feed produced on that land is converted into protein in the animal products we consume. One way to look at that is that we are wasting 90% of the protein that is produced worldwide, while many people in the world go protein malnourished. Then there is the land where we raise our livestock, which is often severely damaged by the overwhelming concentration of animals on that piece of land. There is not enough land on the planet to produce these animal products in an environmentally friendly way. This is not a sustainable way of feeding the world.

OUR CLIMATE - The impacts of animal production on climate change have been well documented. The methane, nitrous oxide and O2 produced by animal agriculture are significant contributors to climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been increasing its focus on animal agriculture with each new report it produces. Animal agriculture produces about 15% of all greenhouse gas emissions, which is more than all transportation emissions combined, and more than all emissions from power generation. Our society has looked a lot at transportation and power generation as big contributors to climate change, but people are often reluctant to bring up the role of the food we eat. People often have strong emotional connections to the foods they eat, so they find it harder to change their eating habits than to change their transportation methods or power sources. If we are to care about the seventh generation, then reducing the severity of climate change should be at the top of our list, and animal products are a big part of the problem.

PUBLIC HEALTH - The health consequences to individuals of consuming certain animal products are well known—for example, the well-established connection between red meat consumption and colon cancer. However, my focus here is not on how we might be harming ourselves by what we eat. Rather, I want us to think about how our food choices might be harmful to the health of others. Unfortunately, animal agriculture has become a significant threat to public health. Besides the polluted water and polluted air affecting public health, there are the antibiotics. Antibiotics are used excessively in animal agriculture, and that creates a huge breeding ground for antibiotic-resistant pathogens. In the US, 80% of the antibiotics sold are used in animal agriculture. Even animals who are not sick in any way are given antibiotics, just to promote growth. Bacteria mutate on a regular basis, so antibiotic-resistant mutations are favored in an environment saturated with antibiotics. The new strains produced in this way are then transmitted to humans who encounter the animals or their manure, or to humans who have contact with the raw meat of the animals. Once in the human population, the new strains can be transmitted person to person. In 2015, the WHO warned the world that antibiotics in animal agriculture are an increasingly serious threat to global health.

The IPCC, the WHO, and numerous academic studies are all warning us that we need to do something about problems associated with the foods we eat. It is time we did more to address this problem. Personally, I have been completely vegan for 33 years. It does not seem to have harmed my health at all, which is contrary to the myth that humans need to consume animal products to be healthy. I am not a crusader for veganism.

I don't try to convert people to my way of eating. Nor am I a big fan of fake meat products, although I don't object to others using them. Perhaps that will help a bit, but it will not be enough. We need to find new ways to get more and more people to reduce their consumption of animal products. This will require cultural changes, more education on this topic, and perhaps even legislation.

I don't know all the answers. However, I do have a pretty good grasp of the extent of the problem.

Sources available upon request.



Next show is Wednesday
May 10th at 3pm

Stir it, UP!

KFCF 88.1 FM



Our radio show in May with our host Josh Shurley and guest to be announced. For more information call on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at (559) 237-3223 or check our website at www.centerfornonviolence.org.

Our radio show in April has our host Josh Shurley with his guest with Mike Wong from Veterans For Peace (the first few minutes got very garbled due to the bad connection, but it improved a few minutes in). The link to hear again is: <https://on.soundcloud.com/QvZCu>.

Our radio show in March has our host Josh Shurley with guest Bob McCloskey from the Alliance back on to provide a winter update on the humanitarian crisis we face with so many unhoused people who are homeless during this wet and cold weather. The takeaway: a right to housing is a must. To hear again go to: <https://on.soundcloud.com/ZVRZb>.