

Big meat and dairy companies are heating up the planet

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A new report shows how the world's 35 largest meat and dairy companies are pursuing growth strategies that will increase their emissions and derail global efforts to prevent dangerous climate change.

The world's largest meat and dairy corporations could become the planet's worst climate polluters within the next few decades, according to a new report by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and GRAIN. At a time when the planet must dramatically reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, these meat and dairy giants are driving overconsumption by ramping up production and exports, despite public commitments that some of them have made to tackle climate change.

The new research shows that:

- Together, the five largest meat and dairy corporations (JBS, Tyson, Cargill, Dairy Farmers of America and Fonterra) are already responsible for more annual greenhouse gas emissions than ExxonMobil, Shell or BP.
- The combined emissions of the top 20 meat and dairy companies surpass the emissions from entire nations such as Germany, Canada, Australia or the United Kingdom.
- Most of the top 35 meat and dairy companies either fail to report emissions entirely or exclude their supply chain emissions which account for 80-90% of their emissions. Only four of them provide comprehensive emissions estimates.
- Only half of the top 35 meat and dairy companies have announced any type of emissions reduction targets. Out of these, only six include supply chain emissions.
- If the growth of the global meat and dairy industry continues as projected, the livestock sector as a whole could consume 80% of the planet's annual greenhouse gas budget by 2050.

The report also shows that the operations of the top 35 companies are highly concentrated in a small number of countries that have a disproportionate share of global meat and dairy production and consumption. Among these countries, the US, the EU countries, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand and China are responsible for over 60% of the emissions from global meat and dairy production-- about twice the rest of the world on a per capita basis. Just six of these countries produce over 67% of the world's beef; just three (US, EU and China) produce 80% of the world's pork, only four produce 61% of the world's chicken, while three (the EU, US and New Zealand) produce nearly half of the world's dairy.

"There's no other choice. Meat and dairy production in the countries where the top 35 companies dominate must be significantly reduced," said Devlin Kuyek of GRAIN. "These corporations are pushing for trade agreements that will increase exports and emissions, and they are undermining real climate solutions like agroecology that benefit farmers, workers and consumers."

"There is no such thing as 'cheap meat,'" said Shefali Sharma of IATP. "For decades, the mass production of meat and dairy has been enabled by farmers getting paid below the cost of production, workers being exploited and taxpayers footing the bill for air, land and water pollution caused by big meat and dairy. It's time we realized over-consumption is directly linked to the subsidies we provide the industry to continue deforesting, depleting our natural resources and creating a major public health hazard through antibiotic overuse. This report shows what a key role they play in creating climate change as well."

Oliver De Schutter, Former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food (2008-2014), Co-chair of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) said, "The industrial livestock and dairy sectors are major contributors to climate change, but they have generally escaped scrutiny because they either don't collect information about their impacts, or don't take credible action on the basis of what they know. This report should encourage governments to take action to stem their further expansion."

The report calls for food systems in which farmers can supply everyone with moderate amounts of high-quality meat and dairy in a way that respects people, animals and the planet.

The full report can be read here:

<https://www.grain.org/e/5976>

<http://iatp.org/emissions-impossible>

GRAIN is a small international non-profit organisation that works to support small farmers and social movements in their struggles for community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems.
<http://grain.org>

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. <http://iatp.org>

Media contacts:

Devlin Kuyek, +1 514-571-7702

devlin@grain.org

Shefali Sharma, +49 177 1469613

ssharma@iatp.org

Chris Palmquist, +1 712-242-6090

cpalmquist@iatp.org