

Eagle Forum Report

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Farm Fresh or Famine?

WHERE'S THE BEEF?

by Peter Murphy, Senior Fellow at the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow, a Washington, D.C.-based not-for-profit that supports free market and technological solutions to meet energy and environmental challenges.

America and the rest of the world are headed for food shortages if policymakers enact laws based on climate change.

The effort to “decarbonize” or to achieve “net zero” carbon emissions has led to deliberate policies to reduce consumption of fossil fuel energy, that is, oil, natural gas and coal. It also is leading to policies to reduce livestock, namely cows since they emit methane, and nitrogen gas, which is essential to produce fertilizer for farming and food production.

The climate industrial complex comprised of non-governmental organizations, the United Nations, the Biden administration, government-funded scientists, activists, and virtue-signaling billionaires are relentless about wielding power and control over the global population, especially in the United States. The ostensible purpose for their tyrannical impulse is to address a supposed “climate emergency” affecting the planet they claim is inexorably turning warmer to the point of an “existential threat” to human life itself.

The climate alarmists’ delusional idea of controlling Earth’s climate means controlling Earth’s inhabi-

tants, including what kind of energy we can use and what we can eat.

Meat is in the climate crosshairs, and not because climate fanatics are vegetarians who care about animal rights. Rather, they wish certain animals did not exist, especially cows, which they view as a major climate malefactor since they flatulate methane gas that purportedly is warming the atmosphere and contributing to eventual planetary doom.

Their logic goes like this: banning beef means fewer cows, so less methane, less warming and we save the planet. Who knew that back yard barbeques and fast-food hamburgers put the planet in peril?

Restricting energy and beef consumption; means the cost of both will rise to the point of being unaffordable to all but the wealthy.

Food prices have increased sharply due to general inflationary actions by governments that are cheapening the value of currencies and from policies to raise the cost of fossil fuel energy, which is essential to produce and transport food to the marketplace. In the United States, food inflation has consistently exceeded overall inflation for more than a year.

For example, in the 12 months ending in February, inflation jumped by six percent while food increased overall by 9.5 percent.

A study by the University College, London, published in 2022, warned less fossil fuel also means extracting less sulfuric acid from these energy sources.



Sulfuric acid is essential for producing phosphorus fertilizers that maintain global food supply. Restricting this ingredient will inexorably lead to less food production and greater shortages.

Fewer cows, less fertilizer and undependable energy will lead to food shortages and higher prices. These climate policies are a recipe for malnutrition, starvation and revolution.

The canaries in the coal mine are two small nations on opposite sides of the planet: Sri Lanka and the Netherlands.

Sri Lanka banned the use of synthetic fertilizer and pesticides, which resulted in a major drop in the rice

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and tea production in 2022, both major exports of that nation. Rice alone is a staple food in Sri Lanka, which ended up having to import the product. The fertilizer ban greatly exacerbated underlying economic problems that led to rioting, a state of emergency and the fall of that nation's government last July.

In the Netherlands, since at least 2019, climate policies have caused upheaval in the agriculture sector, which is world's second largest exporter of beef. To meet the European Commission's rules for lower emissions, the Dutch government proposed to cut emissions from its agriculture sector in half by 2030. This necessitated reducing livestock through buying out or terminating farms, especially smaller, family-operated businesses which could not survive financially with fewer beef-producing cows.

Unable to afford using nitrogen fertilizer and reduced livestock, Dutch farmers rebelled. In 2019, they also created a new political party, the Farmer-Citizen Movement, which has won several provincial elections that determine the make-up of the Netherlands Senate. Since the Senate can block legislation from the lower house of Parliament, the nation's policies to curtail nitrogen emissions and livestock are in jeopardy.

International organizations continue their crusade for meatless "climate smart" food production. The U.N. Environment Programme maintains that worldwide meat and dairy consumption — the cows, again — must be reduced by 50 percent by 2050.

The World Economic Forum has promoted the eating of insects, which it claims is an "unsung category of sustainable and nutritious protein," and that "insects

require less care and upkeep than livestock [and] positively impacts climate change." Still, at the annual WEC meeting last January in Davos, Switzerland, attended by many the world's political and financial elites, I hadn't noticed insects were on the menu.

This penchant for power and control is not only replete in U.N. and other international organizations, but in the Biden administration. Samantha Powers, the head of the U.S. Agency for International Development, last year, said fertilizer shortages, particularly from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, are opportunities to "hasten transitions" in farming toward more so-called green alternatives.


The climate obsessive Bill Gates believes developed nations should convert to synthetic meat. He has been steadily putting his billions of dollars to work to become the largest private farmland owner in the U.S. and is an investor in plant-based protein companies, Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods. All of this is designed to reduce and ultimately eliminate farming and ranching that produce meat and dairy products for a balanced, enjoyable protein-rich diet for Americans and the world.

The founders of these companies in 2019 made the hysterical, self-serving assertion that, "the destructive impact of animal agriculture on our environment far exceeds that of any other technology on Earth, there is no pathway to achieve the Paris climate objectives without a massive decrease in the scale of animal agriculture."

Curtailling carbon emissions by reducing fossil fuel energy use and meat consumption is all about the year 2050, which stands as the latest of many arbitrary climate goalposts established by U.N. climate bureau-

crats. During this imminent, yet distant enough period, we are told the global community must achieve net carbon zero emissions to keep the average global temperature from rising by more than 1.5 degrees — or else ... what? No one honestly can say since the number is more political than science based. Nor can anyone accurately predict if the temperature will warm due to higher carbon emissions. In fact, some indications suggest average global temperature may cool.

Global carbon emissions have risen steadily in the last 100 years (and longer) according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Yet, average planetary temperature has fluctuated throughout, while slightly warming overall during this period. Despite the predictions of so many climate charlatans, the polar ice caps remain, polar bears have proliferated, and wealthy people still own and build on oceanfront property. Moreover, warming periods are influenced by natural causes other than carbon and methane emissions, including ocean temperature and currents and sunspot activity. In reality, over millennia, CO₂ levels in the atmosphere have no historic correlation to global temperature.

So long as politicians, billionaires, celebrities and their media stenographers warn us of planetary risk and doomsday in the future, they will buttress their means for societal control and feed their self-importance. But, like our fellow citizens in Sri Lanka and the Netherlands, we should unapologetically embrace freedom and promote genuine science to work in our chosen profession, warm and cool our homes, travel freely, and decide our own meal choices. 



IS THE SKY FALLING?

by Joel F. Salatin, an American farmer, lecturer, and author. Salatin raises livestock on his Polyface Farm in Swoope, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley. Meat from the farm is sold by direct marketing to consumers and restaurants.

As the nation suffers through yet another High Pathogenic Avian Influenza outbreak, questioning the orthodox narrative is more important than ever. If the world's unable to feed itself, surely we humans need to figure out how to reduce these kinds of losses of poultry.

About 60 million chickens (mainly laying hens) and turkeys died in the last year. A bit more than a decade ago, it was 50 million. Are these cycles inevitable?

If thinking people learned only one thing from the covid pandemic, it was that official government narratives are politically slanted and often untrue. In this latest HPAI outbreak, perhaps the most egregious departure from truth is the notion that the birds have died as a result of the disease and that euthanasia for survivors is the best and only option.

Of the nearly 60 million claimed deaths, perhaps no more than a couple million have actually died from HPAI and the rest were killed in a draconian sterilization protocol.

Very few of the birds killed are in pain or even symptomatically sick. If one chicken in a house of a million tests positive for HPAI, the government brings full law enforcement

force to the farm to guarantee all live birds die. Quickly.

In not a single flock have all the birds died from HPAI. Every flock has survivors. To be sure, most are exterminated prior to survivors being identified. But in the cases of delayed extermination, a few birds appear immune to the disease. To be sure, HPAI is and can be deadly, but it never kills everything.

The policy of mass extermination without regard to immunity, without even researching why some birds flourish while all around are dying, is insane. The most fundamental principles of animal husbandry and breeding demand that farmers select for healthy immune systems. We farmers have been doing that for millennia. We pick the most robust specimens as genetic material to propagate, whether it's plants, animals, or microbes.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture policy is clear: kill everything that ever contacted the diseased birds. The second part of the policy is also simple: find a vaccine to stop HPAI.

If a farmer wanted to save the survivors and run a test on his own to try to breed birds with HPAI immunity, gun-toting government agents prohibit him from doing so. The

scorched earth policy is the only option even though it doesn't seem to be working. In fact, the cycles are coming faster and seem to be affecting more birds.

When HPAI came through our area of Virginia about 15 years ago, federal veterinarians from around the nation descended to oversee the extermination. Two of them had heard about our pastured poultry operation and asked to come out for a visit on their own personal time. They were not together; they came a couple of weeks apart, independently. Both of them told me that they knew the reason for the outbreak: too many birds too densely packed in too many houses too geographically close together. But then both of them said that if they breathed that idea publicly, they would be fired the next day.

The *Wall Street Journal* (2/24/23) headlined "America Is Losing Bird-Flu Battle." While the article touts the official narrative about wild birds spreading the disease and farmers spreading it on their shoes, one farmer dares to say that "his largest facility houses about 4 million cage-free chickens, which are too many chickens in one locale. 'We would never do that again,' he said. New facilities will be smaller, housing about one million birds each, he said, and spaced farther apart to help thwart the threat of continued outbreak."

The article quotes Dr. John Clifford, former U.S. chief veterinary officer, as saying "It's everywhere." If it's everywhere, what difference does reducing flock sizes and putting more space between houses make? Clearly the farmer in this story has a hunch shared by my two visiting federal veterinarians many years ago: too many, too dense, too close.

To be sure, even backyard flocks



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are susceptible to HPAI, but many of these miniature flocks are on filthy dirt spots and suffer terrible hygienic conditions. Even so, keeping a million birds in a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) happy and hygienic is harder than a backyard flock, and the disease data supports this. The USDA and the industry desperately want to blame wild birds, backyard flocks, and dirty shoes rather than looking in the mirror and realizing this is nature's way of screaming "Enough!"

The poultry industry assumed that if 100 birds in a house was good, 200 was better. With the advent of antibiotics and vaccines, houses increased in size and bird density. But nature bats last.

For the record, any agricultural system that views wildlife as a liability is an inherently anti-ecological model. The WSJ article notes that "workers have installed netting over lagoons and other spots where wild birds gather." Lagoons are inherently anti-ecological. They are cesspools of disease and filth; nature never creates manure lagoons. In nature, animals spread manure out over the landscape where it can be a blessing, not a curse like a lagoon. Perhaps the real culprit is the industry making manure lagoons infecting wild ducks, not the other way around.

Notice the kind of bad guy slant on this WSJ sentence: "Buzzards, wild ducks or pests that sneak into barns also can spread the flu virus through mucus or saliva." Doesn't this read like a proverbial conspiracy, with wild things sneaking around? It's all eerily similar to the covid virus sneaking around, needing to be contained with quarantines and masks. One feather contains enough HPAI to affect a million birds. You can't lock down a chicken house from an errant feather or its microscopic molecules

from wafting into a house.

If our current ag policy is insane, what is a better alternative? My first suggestion is to save the survivors and begin breeding them. That's a no-brainer. If a flock gets HPAI, let it run its course. It'll kill the ones it'll kill but in a few days the survivors will be obvious. Keep those and put them in a breeding program. The beautiful thing about chickens is that they mature and propagate fast enough so that in a year you can move forward two generations. Let survival determine tomorrow's genetic pool.

Second, how about working on conditions that increase hygiene and happiness? Yes, I said happiness. All animals have optimal herd and flock sizes. For example, you never see more than a couple hundred wild turkeys together. Even when populations are high in an area, they break up into smaller groups rather than joining forces in flocks of 1,000. Other birds do join up in big flocks.

Optimal sizes do exist for stress-free living. For chickens, it's about 1,000. An elderly poultry industry scientist visited our farm once and told me that if houses would break up chickens into 1,000-bird groups it would virtually eliminate diseases. He said it was okay to have 10,000 birds in a house as long as they were in 1,000-bird units. That way their social structure can function in a natural interaction. Animals have a hierarchy of bullies and timids. That social structure breaks down above optimal size.


With most herbivores, the size is huge. Honey bees divide when the hive reaches a certain size. Wild pigs too seek a group size seldom exceeding 100. The point is that the first line of defense is to figure out where the stress-free sweet spot is and respect it.

Finally, treat the chickens like chickens. In addition to proper flock size, give them fresh pasture in which

to run and scratch. With mobile shelter, on our farm we move the flocks every day or so to fresh pasture. That keeps them on new ground that's been host free for an extended period of rest. They don't sleep, eat, and live every moment of every day on their toilet.

The American Pastured Poultry Producers Association is a trade organization promoting protocols for this kind of immune-boosting model. Thousands of practitioners adhere to mobile infrastructure that allows appropriate-sized flocks access to fresh air, sunlight, bugs, worms, and succulent green material.

While I don't want to sound flippant or above HPAI susceptibility, incident rates definitely indicate less vulnerability in well-managed pastured flocks. Creating an immune-building protocol surely merits research as much as overriding the immune system with vaccines and trying to stay ahead of disease mutations and adaptations with human cleverness. How about humbly seeking nature for solutions rather than relying on hubris?

The parallels between HPAI expert orthodoxy and covid orthodoxy are too numerous to mention. Fear porn is rampant in our culture. The HPAI worry feeds food worry, which makes people clamor for government security. People will accept just about anything if they're afraid. Does anyone really think human cleverness is going to beat migratory ducks? 

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