

Meat

Deforestation

In 1990 the World Hunger Program at Brown University calculated that recent world harvests, if equitably distributed with no diversion of grain to feeding livestock, could provide a vegetarian diet to **6 billion** people, whereas a meat-rich diet like that of people in the wealthier nations could support only **2.6 billion**.

In Central America, 40 percent of all the rainforests have been cleared or burned down in the last 40 years, mostly for cattle pasture to feed the export market—often for U.S. beef burgers.... Meat is too expensive for the poor in these beef-exporting countries, yet in some cases cattle have ousted highly productive traditional agriculture. —John Revington in World Rainforest Report

Fresh water

The standard diet of a person in the United States requires **4,200 gallons** of water per day (for animals' drinking water, irrigation of crops, processing, washing, cooking, etc.). A person on a vegan diet requires only **300 gallons** a day.—Richard H. Schwartz in Judaism and Vegetarianism

A report from the International Water Management Institute, noting that 840 million of the world's people remain undernourished, recommends finding ways to produce more food using less water. The report notes that it takes **550 litres** of water to produce enough flour for one loaf of bread in developing countries...but up to **7,000 litres** of water to produce **100 grams** of beef. —UN Commission on Sustainable Development, "Water—More Nutrition Per Drop," 2004

Waste disposal

Giant livestock farms, which can house hundreds of thousands of pigs, chickens, or cows, produce vast amounts of waste. In fact, in the United States, these "factory farms" generate more than **130 times** the amount of waste that people do. —Natural Resources Defense Council

Nutrients in animal waste cause algal blooms, which use up oxygen in the water, contributing to a "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico where there's not enough oxygen to support aquatic life. The dead zone stretched over 7,700 square miles during the summer of 1999. —Natural Resources Defense Council

Energy consumption,

It takes the equivalent of a gallon of gasoline to produce a pound of grain-fed beef in the United States. Some of the energy was used in the feedlot, or in transportation and cold storage, but most of it went to fertilizing the feed grain used to grow the modern steer or cow.... To provide the yearly average beef consumption of an American family of four requires over 260 gallons of fossil fuel. —"Meat Equals War," web-site of Earth Save, Humboldt, California

It takes, on average, **28 calories** of fossil fuel energy to produce **1 calorie** of meat protein for human consumption, [whereas] it takes only **3.3 calories** of fossil-fuel energy to produce **1 calorie** of protein from grain for human consumption. —David Pimentel, Cornell University

Global warming

One ton of methane, the chief agricultural greenhouse gas, has the global warming potential of **23 tons** of carbon dioxide. A dairy cow produces about **75 kilograms** of methane a year, equivalent to over 1.5 [metric] tons of carbon dioxide. The cow, of course, is only doing what comes naturally. But people are inclined to forget, it seems, that farming is an industry. We cleared the land, sowed the pasture, bred the stock, and so on. It's a human business, not a natural one. We're pretty good at it, which is why atmospheric concentrations of methane increased by **150 percent** over the past **250 years**, while carbon dioxide concentrations increased by **30 percent**. —Pete Hodgson, New Zealand Minister for Energy, Science, and Fisheries