

## **Independent Animal Welfare Body to Phase Out Animal Agriculture**

Australia needs to phase out all animal agriculture. A new independent farmed animal welfare body needs to be established immediately and it needs to represent the interests of farmed animals. It needs to recognize the sentience of animals as proven by a number of studies<sup>1,2</sup>. The objective of this farmed animal welfare body is to end all animal agriculture in Australia.

Without a doubt, Australians recognise the ability of farmed animals to suffer and the health benefits of vegetarian diets. Farmed animals are the most abused animals in modern society. The rise of factory farming has allowed the welfare of these animals to be neglected. In a number of occasions workers at slaughterhouses have been caught imposing cruelty to the animals to be slaughtered. An investigation by the NSW and ACT Animal Liberation has found workers at the Ingham's slaughterhouse abused live turkeys by repeatedly kicking, punching and stomping them. These workers have apparently done so out of boredom<sup>18</sup>.

On a recent Roy Morgan survey, in just 4 years (2012-2016), the number of Australian adults whose diets are vegetarian or almost all vegetarian has risen from 1.7 million to almost 2.1 million people<sup>3</sup>. In New South Wales alone, there has been a 30% growth of vegetarian diet and almost 53.4% Australians chose to eat less red meat in the period of the survey. A healthy vegan diet excludes all animal products and instead gains the required nutrition from wholefoods vegetables, fruit, nuts and seeds. There have been a number of studies that have showed the health benefits of vegan diet<sup>4-13</sup>. Vegans benefit from the diet by having greater protection against cardiovascular disease, some cancers, obesity, hypertension and type-2 diabetes as well as reduced depression and anxiety.

Several Australian Government bodies have acknowledged and endorsed vegan diet as healthy. The State of Victoria's Better Health Channel recognised that a well-balanced vegan diet is beneficial for health and can reduce diseases including obesity, coronary artery disease, hypertension, diabetes and some cancers<sup>14</sup>. The rates of illness and death from a number of degenerative diseases are also lower in vegans and the diet is appropriate for all stages of life. The Australian Sports Commission likewise acknowledged well-balanced vegetarian or vegan diets to be healthy<sup>15</sup>. In fact, many athletes choose a vegetarian diet in order to maintain health and maximise performance in training and competition. Finally, the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) stated that with careful planning, a vegan diet provides adequate nutritional needs<sup>16</sup>. They also noted that plant-based foods tend to be cholesterol free, low in saturated fat and high in fiber, complex carbohydrates, vitamins and other essential nutrients. Vegans are less likely to be overweight or obese and have lower risk of heart disease, strokes, diabetes and cancer. The Medical Journal of Australia has also published an article that endorses vegan diet based on the benefits of the diet in weight management and risk reduction of chronic diseases<sup>17</sup>. All of these Government bodies are in accordance with one another promoting vegan diet as healthy.

Lastly, animal agriculture has massive negative impact on the environment. It is in fact the number one leading cause of global warming<sup>19</sup>. In 20 years alone, animal agriculture is accounted for 50% of all greenhouse gases emission in Australia. That is due to the land clearing for grazing, methane production and savanna burning for clearing and manure. In a study that estimated water use in the United States, it is revealed that animal agriculture is responsible 80-90% water consumption<sup>20</sup>.

Furthermore, a research needs to be carried out into how to phase out animal agriculture with minimized impact on the economy and employment. It needs to also support the positive impact on the environment and human health. The managing board of the body should objectively represent the interests of animals and not the animal agriculture industries. It will educate the community about animal sentience, animal exploitation in agriculture and a healthy vegan diet. The resulting community is against cruelty to animals and the majority believe that vegan diets can be healthy. The public will support the complete phasing out of animal agriculture in Australia given the right support and education.

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