**Frequently Asked Questions**

*Remember, if anyone asks a question you don't know the answer to, just say, “I don't know the answer offhand, but if you write down your question and email address I can research it and get back to you” or “I want to make sure that I have the correct figure, so I'll have to research that and get back to you.”*

**What about humane/sustainable meat?**

Locally produced, small-scale meat production is an improvement over factory farming, but there are a few important things to keep in mind…

One is that, as we discussed in the presentation, labels can be misleading. Pretty much any meat you find in a restaurant or supermarket is coming from a factory farm, even if it’s labeled cage-free, free-range, etc. And remember, there are plenty of “local” factory farms.

The other important thing to keep in mind is that there is no way to raise 9 billion animals sustainably. Factory farming exists because it’s the most efficient way to raise as many animals as possible. If we are actually going to switch back to a system of small-scale, pastured farms, people would be eating meat maybe once a week or once a month.

And the final thing to remember is that plant-based protein is almost always going to be more sustainable than meat-based protein because it’s much more efficient. Rather than burping methane and pooping nitrous oxide, plants take in CO2 and give off oxygen. Plant-based protein requires less land, water, and fossil fuels compared to animal-based protein. Anyone who's serious about eating meat sustainably is going to be eating a mostly vegetarian diet.

**What about lions/early humans? Why is it ok for them to eat meat but not us?**

Animals like lions and our early ancestors had no choice but to eat meat in order to survive. We live in a modern agricultural society, rather than a hunter-gatherer society, so we have a huge array of plant-based proteins. Unlike animals or our ancestors, we don't need meat to thrive.

**Meat tastes too good to become a vegetarian.**

You don't have to give up the tastes and textures you love in order to become a vegetarian. There are now products like Gardein and Beyond Meat that fool chefs in blind taste tests. And even if you really don't think you can give up meat completely, you can still make changes. It doesn't have to be all or nothing. More and more Americans are becoming “flexitarians.” Participating in Meatless Mondays, using soy crumbles instead of ground beef in tacos or chili, getting Trader Joe's Meatless Meatballs, switching from cow milk to almond milk... all of those choices make a big difference, even if you're not 100% vegetarian or vegan.

**If everyone becomes a vegetarian, won't this create economic hardship for those who depend on animal agriculture?**

It's true that if everyone became a vegetarian, some farmers and workers would have to find new jobs. But factory farms employ far fewer people than small farms, and slaughterhouse jobs are traumatic and debilitating. If everyone switched to a plant-based diet, there would be thousands of new jobs created on farms growing fruits and vegetables and in companies making plant-based products.

Keep in mind that there's nothing new or unusual about the process of an entire industry disappearing. For example, people who worked in the horse carriage industry needed to find new jobs after cars were invented.

**If everyone becomes a vegetarian, then what will we do with all the farm animals?**

Farm animals exist in such large numbers only because they're being bred to be slaughtered for meat. If the demand for meat decreases, they breed fewer animals. So the more people become vegetarian, the fewer animals are bred into a life of suffering. The whole world isn't going to go vegetarian overnight, so it would be a gradual process of decreasing the number of animals that are bred to be slaughtered.

(If someone is worried that cows will go extinct) If we got to the point where the whole world was vegetarian, we could still raise some farm animals on sanctuaries.

**What's the situation like in other countries?**

The United States is ground zero for factory farming and we eat more meat than any other country, so other countries are generally better than the US (though that's not saying much). The EU has more stringent regulation of animal treatment conditions, though there are factory farms in England. Some American companies have moved their factory farming operations to countries with less regulation, like Mexico and Romania. And as demand for meat increases in China, India, and Brazil, factory farming is becoming more common there as well.

**Are you vegan?**

If someone asks this before the end of the presentation, say you’ll talk about dietary choices at the end of the presentation. At that point, answer truthfully, but make it clear that you’re talking about your personal experience and not dictating what everyone should do. You can talk about your period of transition (especially if it took a while or was difficult at first, that will give people something to relate to). Or if you’ve been vegan for a long time, mention that it’s now second nature, just as much of a habit as eating animal products used to be. If you’re not vegetarian or vegan that’s fine to tell people, just so long as you emphasize that you opt for plant-based products as much as possible.

**Where do you get your protein?**

So many places! Beans, lentils, whole grains, soy, nuts. People need about 50g of protein a day, which isn’t hard to do if you’re eating a healthy, varied diet. Most Americans eat twice as much protein as they’re supposed to, which causes its own health problems. You're probably already eating plant-based proteins without thinking about it. Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, falafels, and veggie burritos with beans and rice are all complete proteins.

For more nutritional information, check out www.chooseveg.com

**What does a normal day’s worth of food look like for you?**

Answer truthfully, highlighting recognizable foods that everyone eats (burritos, pizza, etc.)

**Where do you get your omega-3’s?**

Flax seeds, hemp seeds, chia seeds, and walnuts are all good sources of omega 3's. Personally I add flax seeds or hemp seeds into my smoothies in the morning.

**Don’t we need calcium for healthy bones?**

Dark leafy greens like kale have lots of calcium, as do some other foods like walnuts. Most plant-based dairy products, like almond milk and soy yogurt, are fortified with just as much calcium as cow milk-based dairy products. There are many cultures that don't traditionally consume dairy products and still have healthy bones, like Japan.

**What about B12?**

B12 is the one nutrient that you can’t get from plant-based sources, you need to supplement. B12 isn’t made directly by animals; it’s made by bacteria, and then stored in animal tissue. You can either take a B12 supplement, or eat foods fortified with B12, like nutritional yeast and some almond milks. It is incredibly important to make sure you’re getting enough B12 because deficiencies can cause serious nerve damage over time. But it’s an easy & inexpensive supplement that you can get at any pharmacy or grocery store.

**What about grazing cows in arid lands that can’t be used to grow crops? Isn’t that sustainable?**

In some cases it’s true that you can raise animals in conditions in which you couldn’t raise other food sources. But remember that 99% of animal products are raised on factory farms. Right now those situations are purely theoretical. What’s not theoretical is that cutting down your animal product consumption and switching to plant-based proteins dramatically reduces your carbon and water footprint.

**Why is (insert factory farming process, or whole system of factory farming) legal?**

The simple answer is that agribusiness is one of the most powerful lobbies in the country, at the local, state, and federal levels. They’ve worked extremely hard to make sure that the government doesn’t regulate factory farms. That’s why we have to use our own power as citizens and consumers to fight this industry by driving down demand, and contacting our legislators anytime there are bills related to factory farming.

**What about food deserts/food access issues? What do you tell people who don't have access to vegan food?**

Food access is definitely a serious issue in the U.S., and we tailor our message according to the audience. For instance, we speak to students at high schools in Oakland who live in foods deserts, and we encourage them to take small steps like leaving the pepperoni off their pizza, or making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich instead of a turkey sandwich.

For those of us who are fortunate enough to have access to well-equipped kitchens and healthy foods, the best thing that we can do is to exercise our power. Food deserts exist because the government subsidizes meat & dairy but not fruits & vegetables. By voting with our dollars, we can increase demand for healthier products, and slowly shift our food system. Almond milk is a great example of that – a few years ago you it was an expensive luxury good only found in health food stores, but now it's sold at nearly every major supermarket and chain store, and is cheaper than cow milk, because people showed there was demand for it.

**Isn't vegan food expensive?**

The cheapest protein sources are vegan – lentils, tofu, beans. If you think about it, most traditional diets worldwide are predominantly vegetarian or vegan, and meat is considered a luxury good. In the U.S. that’s been flipped on its head thanks to government subsidies. But if you think about it, McDonald’s is cheap in the moment but it comes with thousands of dollars in health care costs down the line.

It’s true that some of the speciality vegan products are expensive, like coconut ice cream and artisan sausages, it’s easy to be vegan on a very low budget, especially if you can cook for yourself. I highly recommend the website Plant-Based On a Budget, where they post recipes that can feed a person for $25 per week, or just over $1/meal.

**What are other ways to address this issue on the bigger scale, beyond personal food choices?**

Unfortunately, Big Ag has a lot of power over the federal and state governments, so it’s hard to get laws passed addressing this issue. But there has been success with ballot initiatives that take the issue directly to the people. Some groups do work on legislative issues, so you can subscribe to legislative updates from the Humane Society of the United States to get notified when there’s a local or federal bill related to farm animals, so you know to call your congressperson.

Writing letters to the editor is also a great way to help draw more attention to this issue.

The best thing to do on a personal level, besides changing your diet, is to talk to friends about this issue. Let them know what you've learned, and share the delicious new foods you're eating! Also, of course, you can help schedule an FFAC presentation!

**Why does FFAC stick to grassroots education?**

We looked around and saw a niche that wasn’t being filled. There are lots of national non-profits with offices in Washington D.C. that are doing policy and lobbying work. But Congresspeople aren’t going to push for change unless their constituents want it, and right now there are still far too many people who don’t know about factory farming. We’re working in tandem with the bigger non-profits to educate and empower consumers so that there will be more popular, widespread support for reforms.

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**What specific brands of humane eggs/meat/milk do you recommend?**

We as an organization don’t personally recommend any, because our focus is on encouraging people to switch to plant-based proteins rather than meat, for a variety of reasons. There are some third-party certifying agencies that you can find online, which list their criteria. That’s your best bet for finding products that are in line with your morals. The Cornucopia Institute has a good guide to eggs that lists whether or not the companies debeak their chickens. But keep in mind that you can’t just look at the companies’ websites, you need to find a third-party certifying agency and do some pretty thorough research to make sure that you’re not just paying more for buzz words.

**What are the 4 companies that control everything?**

The biggest are JBS, Tyson, Smithfield, and Cargill.

**What do they feed the calves?**

The calves are fed a mixture of watery oat gruel and milk that can’t legally be sold for human consumption because it has too much blood and/or pus.

**Is bovine growth hormone in all non-organic milk?**

No, now many brands that are not organic specify that they don’t contain rBST. But processed products made with milk (cheese, ice cream, processed foods) usually don’t specify.

**Why do they have to separate the calves from the mothers within 48 hours specifically?**

Within the first 48 hours, cows give milk with too much blood in it to legally sell to people. As soon as they switch to milk that can be sold, the calves are taken away.

**What countries does the U.S. export meat to?**

Mexico, Canada, Japan, the Middle East, Korea, and Russia are the largest markets for US meat.