

Meat atlas shows Latin America has become a soybean empire

Global food production trends are outlined in a new report. We've picked out the best facts and infographics for you here

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Food choices might be deeply personal but their impact is often anything but. A new report by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Friends of the Earth has sought to visualise the consequences of our decisions using global data. Here are some of the facts they've attempted to uncover.

\$38.7 bn

Ever heard of JBS foods? Their revenues in 2012 alone were \$38.7 bn - that's more than the GDP of Zimbabwe, Barbados, Iceland and Mauritius combined. If you want to find out who the biggest players are in the meat industry, you can find out about the top 10 below (bigger version here).

Latin America's soy empire

Argentina has driven a major new trend in the region, and it comes in the shape of a bean. Huge money is to be made from soy but small farmers are rarely the winners; their number has almost halved since 1988 to 270,000.

The fact that there is now 4x more acreage dedicated to soybean production and as much as 11x more herbicides used to produce it, has had other negative consequences; the rise in miscarriages and birth defects in rural areas has been attributed to these chemicals.

Santa Fe is Argentina's soy capital. To see a full size map of the cities dominating the soybean industry in Argentina click here

More antibiotics for meat and poultry production than sick people

Industrial producers are giving their livestock huge amounts of pharmaceuticals - and it is often the same antibiotics that are given to humans. They are used for two main reasons; 1) to make sure that animals survive factory farms for long enough to make it to slaughter and 2) to make animals grow bigger, faster. Pigs on antibiotics for example can reach their market weight with 10-15% less feed than those without the drugs.

There are concerns that overuse of these drugs means that bacteria are becoming resistant to them, harder to treat, and more likely to result in 'superbugs' like e coli and salmonella. In America, the distribution of these drugs for animals has overtaken sales to treat humans.

About 1 in 50 Americans is vegan

The Wikipedia article on veganism was viewed 145,000 times in August 2013 - more popular than the post on vegetarianism which was viewed 123,000 times. In fact, veganism was viewed more than vegetarianism in English, French, Spanish, German, Russian and Portuguese versions of the site.

The only exception was the Japanese language where vegetarianism received almost twice as many page views as the post on veganism.

Over 300 types of edible insect

If vegetarianism doesn't appeal, there may be another way to get protein: insects.

Farmers receive less money from the state

The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) might be controversial but subsidising farmers is nothing new. In the mid 90s, sheep and milk farmers in developed countries would receive as much as 40% of their income from subsidies.

A small swimming pool of water to produce four steaks

Vague claims are often made about how demanding meat production is on the earth's water resources. This report uses statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to show just how many litres of water it takes to produce 1kg of various food products.

1kg of beef requires around 15,455 litres of water (around 110 bathtubs' worth). 1kg of cheese takes 5,000 litres to produce compared to 3,400 litres for the same amount of rice and just 131 litres to grow a kilogram of carrots.

The data comes with a warning;

Some 2.5 billion people already live in areas subject to water stress; by 2025, it will be over half of humanity, and conflicts over water are expected to become more acute

Camels and reindeer are key livestock in many countries

The map of smallholder farmers shows that the world is still a diverse place. You can see a full size version [here](#).

What else does the report say?

Here are some other findings that might be of interest

For every kg of soybeans grown, 7.7 kg of greenhouse gases are released (in Brazil alone)

A French research company called Valorex changed the diet of livestock from maize and soy to linseed and grass. The result was a drop of 20% in the methane content of the bovine burps

By 2020, 124 million tonnes of poultry will be produced globally - an increase of 25% in just 10 years. In India, consumption is expected to rise nearly tenfold to 10 million tonnes a year

Domino's plans to add 125 food chains in India next year. While McDonald's plans to increase from 166 to more than 200 stores, the company Yum! (which owns Kentucky

Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut & Taco Bell will increase its presence in the country from 500 outlets to more than 750.

Take a look at the report for yourself and let us know what you think in the comments below

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The Top Ten of the international meat industry

Companies by total food sales (2011–13), billion dollars

