

## STATEMENT on Megafarms

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The Center for Animal Ethics at Pompeu Fabra University is glad to observe the beginnings of a conversation about the industrialized production of animal-based food. We also welcome the political will and the existing favorable current of public opinion to put an end to megafarms – that is, intensive farms with hundreds or even thousands of animals confined in a very small space. Most of the animals exploited in the food sector, both terrestrial and aquatic, are found in facilities of this type. The end of megafarms would mean the end of most of the harms, and amongst the worst of the harms, that human beings cause to other animals under our direct control.

In this regard, we must remember:

**Megafarms produce the highest and least justifiable concentration of animal suffering.** This is so both because of the number of victims and because of the characteristics of the confinement to which animals are subjected. They suffer under these conditions throughout their lives, hidden from the public and under deficient official supervision.

**Meat is not necessary for human health.** The claim that animals need to be exploited in order to feed humans ignores the scientific consensus on the adequacy of plant-based diets, as well as the experience of millions of humans who follow these diets for the benefit of their health.

**Megafarms are dangerous.** They facilitate the appearance and spread of zoonotic diseases and are also linked to the intensive use of antibiotics and other drugs in animals, with the consequent impact on the emergence of bacteria resistant to these drugs.

**Megafarms are an ecological catastrophe.** They are a disaster for the local environment, due to the pollution they produce, as well as a global disaster, due to their effect on global warming. And while it is very difficult to eliminate other causes of global warming or pollution, getting rid of megafarms is easy, provided we have the will to do so.

**Megafarms do not provide employment.** Megafarms reduce employment opportunities, especially with respect to plant-based food production (by reducing the area available to grow them) and the rural tourism they displace. Nor are they effective against rural depopulation, but quite the opposite. What we value in the rural world – non-industrialization, clean air, uncontaminated nature – is precisely what mega farms destroy.

**Plant-based alternatives are the only way forward.** This is not so only from an ethical point of view, but also from an economic and social point of view. In this country we have an excellent climate for the production of fruits and vegetables, whose consumption is increasing every day in developed countries. We now know the health advantages of plant-based diets. We know how much precious public health resources can be saved thanks to them. We could become a great producer of plant-based products. Our civilization must move towards humane, sustainable, and health-conscious food systems. Megafarms are the exact opposite of progress and we must firmly reject them.

For these reasons, we encourage civil society and political institutions to promote the transition of the food sector from the production of animal-based protein to the production of environmentally-friendly plant-based food.