# George Monbiot challenges claims of sustainable cattle and sheep farming



George Monbiot, a prominent journalist and environmental activist, has raised serious concerns about recent reports that advocate for the sustainability of animal farming, specifically those linked to notable industry players. In his latest op-ed, he dismantles two influential studies that suggest cattle and sheep farming could be environmentally friendly, expressing firm skepticism about their underlying motives.

The initial report, associated with Oxfordshire's FAI Farms and funded by McDonald’s, promotes the concept of “regenerative grazing” and claims that the farm achieves “beyond net-zero” carbon emissions. However, Monbiot is critical, asserting that the report lacks credible data, highlighting its miscalculations in carbon sequestration and reliance on inconsistent sampling methods. He argues that these “unquantifiable” variables render the findings meaningless, as they fail to substantiate the claim that such farming practices can mitigate environmental harm.

Similarly, the second report published by the Sustainable Food Trust (SFT) encourages a shift towards “regenerative mixed farming” with a focus on temporary meadows for grazing livestock. This study proposes that the diet should skew towards beef and lamb rather than the more commonly consumed pork and poultry. Monbiot suggests that adopting SFT’s practices on a wide scale would necessitate significant food imports or require a drastic alteration of national dietary habits, alongside an unavoidable rise in food prices and a substantial reduction in food waste.

Monbiot’s critique arrives amid broader discussions about the meat industry’s strategic responses to negative perceptions. A March report from the Animal Law Foundation found that British consumers are frequently misled about the impacts of meat, dairy, and other animal products through tactics reminiscent of those used by the tobacco industry. This connection underscores Monbiot’s argument that agricultural claims often stem from industry lobbying rather than genuine environmental concern. Notably, Patrick Holden, SFT’s founder and a farming advisor to King Charles, is also a dairy farmer, calling into question the impartiality of the study.

The environmental footprint of beef production remains heavily scrutinised. Monbiot has long argued that livestock farming is among the most resource-intensive and “climate-damaging” sectors. He articulates that while the “romantic” imagery of pastoral farming may resonate culturally, it distracts from the stark reality that livestock contribute significantly to pollution and inhibit the recovery of ecosystems that are crucial for carbon storage.

In previous writings, Monbiot has consistently pushed for a radical shift away from livestock farming towards lab-grown and plant-based alternatives. He has pointed out that livestock farming occupies vast swathes of land yet yields relatively minimal nutritional benefits, exacerbating issues of habitat loss and ecological degradation. By focusing on sustainable solutions grounded in evidence, rather than idealistic narratives, Monbiot believes we can more effectively tackle the pressing challenges of climate change and food security.

As the debate around sustainable farming techniques intensifies, Monbiot stresses the importance of critical evaluation of claims in the agricultural sector. He warns against falling prey to industry rhetoric and advocates for a rigorous, evidence-based approach to environmental policy. Only by acknowledging the full impact of livestock farming can we hope to construct a more sustainable food system that aligns with global climate goals.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://plantbasednews.org/news/environment/george-monbiot-debunks-animal-farming-reports/)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://plantbasednews.org/news/environment/george-monbiot-debunks-animal-farming-reports/)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://plantbasednews.org/news/environment/george-monbiot-debunks-animal-farming-reports/)
4. Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://plantbasednews.org/news/environment/george-monbiot-debunks-animal-farming-reports/)
5. Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://plantbasednews.org/news/environment/george-monbiot-debunks-animal-farming-reports/)
6. Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://plantbasednews.org/news/environment/george-monbiot-debunks-animal-farming-reports/)
7. Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://plantbasednews.org/news/environment/george-monbiot-debunks-animal-farming-reports/)
8. Paragraph 8: [[1]](https://plantbasednews.org/news/environment/george-monbiot-debunks-animal-farming-reports/)
9. Paragraph 9: [[4]](https://www.monbiot.com/2022/11/14/silence-of-the-lambs/), [[6]](https://www.monbiot.com/2023/12/14/call-me-all-the-names-you-want-i-wont-stop-telling-the-truth-about-livestock-farming/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://plantbasednews.org/news/environment/george-monbiot-debunks-animal-farming-reports/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/04/livestock-farming-artificial-meat-industry-animals> - In this 2017 article, George Monbiot argues that livestock farming is unsustainable and that the future lies in lab-grown meat. He criticizes the inefficiency of grazing, stating that it occupies vast land areas while providing minimal dietary benefits. Monbiot also highlights the environmental damage caused by livestock, including habitat loss and ecosystem simplification, and advocates for a shift towards plant-based diets to mitigate climate change.
3. <https://www.monbiot.com/2024/04/16/moo-woo/> - George Monbiot critiques claims that cattle farming can be carbon neutral or negative. He points out the lack of empirical evidence supporting such assertions and highlights the inefficiencies in carbon sequestration methods promoted by proponents of regenerative grazing. Monbiot emphasizes the need for evidence-based approaches to address climate change and warns against misleading narratives that could hinder progress.
4. <https://www.monbiot.com/2022/11/14/silence-of-the-lambs/> - In this article, Monbiot discusses the environmental impact of grass-fed meat, arguing that it is more damaging than commonly perceived. He presents data showing that livestock farming occupies a disproportionate amount of land relative to its contribution to global protein supply. Monbiot advocates for a transition to plant-based diets to reduce land use and mitigate environmental degradation.
5. <https://www.monbiot.com/2022/08/19/unholy-cow/> - Monbiot examines the environmental costs of organic, pasture-fed beef and lamb, stating that they are among the most damaging agricultural products. He discusses the extensive land use required for livestock grazing and the minimal protein yield, highlighting the inefficiencies and ecological impact of such farming practices. Monbiot calls for a reevaluation of livestock farming's role in food production.
6. <https://www.monbiot.com/2023/12/14/call-me-all-the-names-you-want-i-wont-stop-telling-the-truth-about-livestock-farming/> - In this piece, Monbiot addresses the spread of misinformation regarding livestock farming, particularly in the context of climate change. He criticizes the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's report for downplaying the impacts of the livestock industry and promoting ineffective solutions. Monbiot emphasizes the need for honest discourse and evidence-based policies to address the environmental challenges posed by livestock farming.
7. <https://www.monbiot.com/2022/08/19/unholy-cow/> - Monbiot examines the environmental costs of organic, pasture-fed beef and lamb, stating that they are among the most damaging agricultural products. He discusses the extensive land use required for livestock grazing and the minimal protein yield, highlighting the inefficiencies and ecological impact of such farming practices. Monbiot calls for a reevaluation of livestock farming's role in food production.