

## Vegan Education in Schools

### Case study of speciesism

#### Questioning meat - ethics, justice and the future

#### Years 7 to 12

### Lesson 2: The environmental destruction caused by the meat industry

**Overview:** This lesson explores the devastating environmental consequences of the meat industry. Students will examine deforestation, climate change, excessive water use, pollution, biodiversity loss and land degradation directly linked to animal agriculture. Using scientific data, case studies and interactive discussions, students will gain a deeper understanding of why the abolition of the meat industry is necessary for planetary survival.

**Objective:** Understand how the meat industry is one of the leading causes of environmental destruction and why abolition, not regulation, is the only solution.

#### Outcomes:

- Students will be able to explain how animal agriculture contributes to deforestation, climate change and biodiversity loss.
- Students will evaluate the environmental footprint of the meat industry compared to vegan food production.
- Students will critically analyse the role of government subsidies in supporting environmentally destructive meat production.
- Students will propose solutions that prioritise environmental sustainability and animal liberation.

#### Materials:

- Videos:
  - [THIS Is How MEAT Is Destroying The AMAZON](#) - Live Kindly
  - [What is causing Amazon rainforest destruction?](#) - Mercy for Animals
  - [Climate change and meat consumption: what's the link?](#) The Vegan Society
- Articles:
  - [Environmental impacts of animal agriculture](#) - Wikipedia article
  - [Deforestation for beef production](#) - Unearthed

- [Livestock's Long Shadow – FAO Report](#) - Wikipedia article
- [Water use in animal agriculture](#) - Water Foodprint Network
- [The devastating water footprint of animal agriculture](#) - Open Access Government
- Case studies:
  - [Brazil's deforestation crisis caused by cattle ranching](#) - WWF
  - [The water footprint of beef vs plant-based proteins](#) - Water Footprint
  - [Methane emissions from cattle farms](#) - The Economist
- Handouts:
  - [Infographics comparing the environmental impact of animal vs plant-based food systems](#) - Ethical Consumer
  - [Government subsidies supporting animal agriculture](#) - Australian Government

### Lesson steps:

- **Introduction (10 minutes):**
  - Ask students: “What do you think is the biggest contributor to climate change?”
  - Brief discussion on common misconceptions (e.g., transportation vs animal agriculture).
  - Introduce key lesson focus: how animal agriculture is destroying the planet.
- **Deforestation and land use (20 minutes):**
  - Show video on Amazon deforestation due to cattle ranching ([What is causing Amazon rainforest destruction?](#), [THIS Is How MEAT Is Destroying The AMAZON](#)).
  - Discuss how forests are cleared to grow soy feed for livestock rather than direct human consumption.
  - Case study: Brazil's beef exports and their link to mass deforestation.
- **Climate change and greenhouse gas emissions (20 minutes):**
  - Show video on meat and climate change ([Climate change and meat consumption: what's the link?](#)).
  - Explain how methane from cows is 28 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>.
  - Discuss methane emissions from Australian cattle farms and their role in climate change.

- **Water consumption and pollution (15 minutes):**
  - Present statistics comparing the water usage of beef vs vegan foods ([Water use in animal agriculture](#), [The devastating water footprint of animal agriculture](#)).
  - Discuss how manure runoff pollutes rivers, leading to ocean dead zones.
  - Case study: The impact of animal agriculture on Australian river ecosystems.
- **Biodiversity loss and habitat destruction (15 minutes):**
  - Discuss how animal farming threatens wildlife habitats.
  - Case study: Koalas losing habitat due to cattle grazing in Australia.
  - Compare the land needed for animal vs vegan food production.
- **Government subsidies supporting destruction (15 minutes):**
  - Present infographic on subsidies for meat and dairy vs vegan alternatives.
  - Discuss how governments support unsustainable animal agriculture despite environmental damage.
  - Ask students to brainstorm policies that would prioritise vegan food production instead.
- **Class discussion and reflection (10 minutes):**
  - Ask students how this information has changed their perspective.
  - Discuss how they can share this knowledge with others.
  - Debate whether government policies should support vegan agriculture instead of animal farming.

#### Homework:

- Write a reflection (300-500 words) on how the meat industry accelerates climate change and what actions should be taken to stop it.
- Research a country that has taken steps to reduce meat consumption and analyse its policies.
- Find an example of greenwashing in the meat industry and explain how it misleads consumers.

**Differentiation:**

- Provide a simplified summary of key environmental impacts for students who need additional support.
- Allow students to present their research on alternative policies instead of writing an essay.
- Encourage advanced students to analyse government policies and propose detailed reforms.
- Use group discussions to help students struggling with written reflections express their thoughts verbally.

**Assessment criteria:**

- Participation in discussions and ability to articulate environmental impacts.
- Depth of analysis in the reflection piece, particularly in identifying industry deception.
- Engagement with research on alternative policies and vegan food production.
- Critical thinking demonstrated in homework assignments and class debates.