

Eating Responsibly: Meat, Milk & Eggs

Why we care

Because Americans eat so much meat, the industry has developed a very efficient system: Confine thousands of animals in one location and raise them quickly on feed crops. However, in these confined feedlot operations, huge amounts of waste accumulate. Nitrogen from the manure enters the groundwater, contaminates drinking water, and creates dead zones in waterways. Feeding these animals requires vast areas dedicated to corn and soybeans—plants that require 80 percent of all herbicides used in the US. At this scale, it's easy to forget that these animals are not just commodities, but sentient beings. If you eat meat, milk, or eggs, you've likely seen labels that suggest responsible practices. Which ones can you trust?

Simple, positive steps

Organic

- [USDA Organic](#) is a third-party approved label promoting practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity.

Grass-fed or pasture-raised

- [American Grassfed](#) is an independent certification program for animals that have been raised on grass or hay and not confined.
- [Animal Welfare Approved](#) animals must be able to behave naturally and be in a state of physical and psychological well-being. Hens must have continuous access to outdoors.
- **Free range** implies that livestock are raised in the open and are free to roam. (But, as little as five minutes per day of access to the outdoors can qualify.)

Humane certified

- [American Humane Certified](#) follows guidelines for the humane care and handling of farm animals.
- [Certified Humane Raised and Handled](#) provides independent verification that animals were raised and handled humanely. No growth hormones or antibiotics.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.