We have to raise meat because it represents the most efficient method of food production. A plant-based diet alone would not be able to meet the needs of the world’s growing population.”

According to David Pimentel, professor of ecology in Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the production of a gram of animal protein requires six grams of plant protein, because most livestock are raised on cultivated grain. In fact, more than half of grain grown in the US and forty percent worldwide is fed to livestock, on land that could be devoted to feeding humans. As for efficiency, production of a kilocalorie of animal protein in the US requires an average of 28 kilocalories of fossil fuel, while the corresponding ratio for grain protein is 3:1. It is thus no wonder that the Worldwatch Institute, a well-respected environmental organization, concluded the following: “[T]he human appetite for animal flesh is a driving force behind virtually every major category of environmental damage now threatening the human future—deforestation, erosion, fresh-water scarcity, air and water pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, social injustice, the destabilization of communities, and the spread of disease.”

Vegetarianism is about reducing suffering, not meeting the constraints of an arbitrary label. Every bit by which you reduce your consumption of animal products is one bit by which you reduce suffering and help the environment. Cutting your meat consumption in half would be half as good as going completely vegetarian.

“I could never go completely vegetarian / vegan, so this information doesn't apply to me.”

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“In fact, if one person is unkind to an animal it is considered to be cruelty, but where a lot of people are unkind to animals, especially in the name of commerce, the cruelty is condoned and, once large sums of money are at stake, will be defended to the last by otherwise intelligent people.”

–Ruth Harrison, author of Animal Machines (1964)