

Viewpoint: ‘Trading one moral catastrophe for another’ — Why swapping beef for chicken won’t fix animal agriculture’s ‘devastating’ environmental impact

[O]ften, the messaging is that we can save the world by [switching out our beef consumption for chicken](#).

The problem with this message is that switching beef for chicken basically amounts to trading one moral catastrophe for another.

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To put it simply, it takes many, many more chicken lives than cow lives to feed people. Cows are big, so raising one produces about [500 pounds of beef](#) — and at the [rate at which the average American eats beef](#), it takes about 8.5 years for one person to eat one cow. But chickens are much smaller, producing only a few pounds of meat [per bird](#), with the average American eating about [one whole chicken every two weeks](#).

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And chicken is no panacea for the climate either. “Its impact on the climate only looks benign when compared with beef’s,” [Mercy for Animals President Leah] Garces [points out](#). “Greenhouse gas emissions per serving of poultry are 11 times higher than those for one serving of beans, so swapping beef with chicken is akin to swapping a Hummer with a Ford F-150, not a Prius.”

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