



18 May 2020

Dear Mr Kairouz,

Greetings from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). Following the worrying news that almost 100 people linked to Cedar Meats have been diagnosed with COVID-19 – a zoonotic disease caused by a virus that originated in a meat market – we're writing to urge your company to choose a new direction: make the transition from slaughtering animals to producing vegan meats.

Long before the novel coronavirus emerged, potentially lethal viruses were already crossing the species barrier to humans from other animals. H1N1 (swine flu), which originated in pigs and killed as many as 575,400 people in the year after it began spreading in humans, was traced back to a US factory farm. H5N1 (bird flu), which can be contracted by humans who come into close contact with infected live or dead birds, has a mortality rate of up to 60% and is considered a concern by the World Health Organization because of its potential to mutate and become highly infectious via human-to-human contact.

The risk of zoonotic diseases isn't limited to "wet markets". Wherever animals are bred, intensively confined, and slaughtered, humans run the risk of creating another pandemic.

In a paper published in 2018, Belgian spatial epidemiologist Marius Gilbert found that more "conversion events" for bird flu – in which a not-very-pathogenic strain of the virus becomes more dangerous – had occurred in Australia than in China. As the global death toll from the coronavirus pandemic climbs to over 300,000, we're being given a stark warning: we can no longer breed and slaughter sentient beings – who suffer immensely – for foods we don't need without grave consequences for human health.

Happily, vegetables, legumes, and other plant-based foods don't harbour zoonotic illnesses or feel pain. They're far better for the planet, too. Producing 1 kilogram of lamb, for example, emits the equivalent of 24 kilograms of carbon dioxide into our atmosphere, whereas producing 1 kilogram of peas emits less than 1 kilogram of carbon dioxide.

Brands such as v2food, Tofurky, Beyond Meat, and The Meatless Farm Company are growing as more and more people choose to eat vegan. Even meat producers such as Tyson, Smithfield, Perdue, and Hormel have invested in the global vegan food market, which is projected to be worth around AU\$49 billion by 2020. In Australia, the demand for plant-based meat products is forecast to generate 6,000 full-time jobs and add nearly AU\$3 billion to the economy in the next 10 years.

Of course, we understand it's likely that animals will always carry zoonotic diseases, and that the Cedar Meats COVID-19 cluster has not been caused by the slaughter of infected animals. Nonetheless, the fact remains: breeding, confining, and slaughtering animals heightens the risk of the emergence of deadly pathogens. Abattoirs play a role in potentially affecting the health of every human being on the planet.

We urge you to create a business that doesn't harm any animals – including humans – giving your employees a safer and far more pleasant work environment, devoid of blood and body parts.

Yours sincerely,

Emily Rice
Senior Outreach and Partnerships Manager
PETA Australia

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

Australia

PO Box 20308
World Square
Sydney NSW 2002

08 8556 5828
Info@peta.org.au
PETA.org.au

Affiliates:

- PETA US
- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (UK)

PETA Australia Pty Ltd
ACN – 128209923