



The Honourable Bill English  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

8 June 2016

Dear Mr English,

On behalf of PETA Australia, I am writing with a proposal that would improve the health of the nation, slash New Zealand's health-care expenditure, help stop climate change and reduce the escalating public debt: all meat, whether it is sold in shops or in restaurants, should be subject to value-added and excise taxes.

It is illogical that meat is tax-free when tobacco, alcohol and petrol are all taxed because of the negative consequences they have on our health and on the environment.

The following are five reasons why a tax on meat makes sense:

1. Meat consumption has been linked in recent scientific research to a range of health problems that are plaguing New Zealand, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, strokes and certain types of cancer. New Zealand currently has the fourth-highest rate of obesity in the OECD. A three-year investigation by the World Health Organisation (WHO) found that "[o]besity is caused not by moral failure of individuals but by the excess availability of high-fat, high-sugar foods".
2. A WHO report published last year classified processed meats as carcinogenic to humans, based on evidence that consuming them causes colorectal cancer. The WHO also classified red meats as "probably carcinogenic". Colon cancer is already estimated to cost New Zealand taxpayers more than \$80 million a year. Meanwhile, heart disease, the nation's number one killer, could be alleviated or completely reversed if people switched to a plant-based diet, according to a 2014 study by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.
3. Researchers from Auckland, Otago and Oxford universities last year found that a 20 per cent tax on major dietary sources of saturated fat alone could prevent up to 1,500 early deaths. Denmark recently conducted a trial of the so-called "fat tax" applied to meat and dairy foods, and researchers saw a 4 per cent decrease in saturated fat intake and an uptake of fruits and vegetables in just one year.
4. Agriculture is responsible for producing 48 per cent of New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions, according to the Environment Ministry, with two thirds being methane produced by cows and sheep. On a per capita basis, New Zealand has the highest methane emissions in the world, at 600 kilograms per person.
5. Tourists flock to New Zealand to experience its "100% Pure" environment, but animal agriculture is polluting the waterways. The former president of the Wanganui Federated Farmers recently said that dairy farming alone is responsible for 80 per cent of the degradation of New Zealand's waterways. With tourism now the country's top industry, the environment should be a top priority. UN scientific reports have also concluded that the meat industry is one of the top three causes of water pollution, soil erosion, water shortage and pollution, and other environmental problems. The pollution and inefficiency of meat production are depleting and polluting our water, air and arable land.

Health and the environment are two of the most worrying issues facing New Zealand today, and a tax on meat would be an important step towards improving them.

Yours sincerely,

Ashley Fruno  
Associate Director, PETA Australia

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

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