



The Honourable Grant Robertson
Minister of Finance

14 May 2020

Dear Minister,

Greetings from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). I hope this letter finds you well. As the government releases the new budget – delivered, in your words, "in the shadow of 1-in-100 year shock to our society and economy" – **I'm writing to urge you to consider introducing a meat and dairy tax to help the economy and ease the pressure on the health-care system.**

Encouraging New Zealanders to reduce their meat and dairy consumption – and supporting farmers to make the transition to plant-based agriculture – would not only [help prevent further zoonotic pandemics](#), reach vital environmental goals, and end the suffering of millions of sentient beings but also ease the health-care burden of preventable killers such as heart disease and cancer.

The [World Health Organization](#) has classified the consumption of processed meat as "*carcinogenic to humans*", meaning that just like smoking cigarettes, eating bacon, ham, or sausages is incontrovertibly harmful to human health. The Cancer Society links meat consumption to bowel cancer, the nation's second most common type of cancer, while a study published in February found that people who ate two servings of red or processed meat per week had a 3% and 7% higher risk, respectively, of developing cardiovascular disease – New Zealand's biggest killer, which claims a life every 90 minutes.

The detrimental impact of animal agriculture on New Zealand's environment is also stark. The *Environment Aotearoa 2019* report found that a 40% increase in pastureland coupled with a 70% increase in the national dairy herd is contributing to the nation's damaging nitrogen levels, while ruminant animals, such as sheep (who outnumber human New Zealanders six to one) emit methane – a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

Of course, it's not just about human health or the planet. The tens of millions of animals raised for their flesh in New Zealand each year suffer immensely, and I'm sure you'll agree that anything that reduces this harm would be welcome.

According to Radio New Zealand, you've said the government is "focused not only on rebuilding the economy, but on rebuilding it better". As COVID-19, a zoonotic disease, makes our need to evolve away from animal use more apparent than ever, "rebuilding it better" *should*, logically, include a meat and dairy tax.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Emily Rice
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