

## Why Environmentalists Should Support RPA's 10,000 Years Is Enough Campaign

Responsible Policies for Animals, Inc. (RPA), shows influential people and institutions how to implement responsible policies for animals that are also responsible policies for people and ecosystems. Human enterprise developed almost entirely without such policies, and animal exploitation and abuse are key obstacles to ecologically sound, healthful ways of life for human beings. This understanding led RPA to make its first campaign 10,000 Years Is Enough, aimed at ending the teaching of animal agriculture at universities. RPA will appreciate the environmental community's support for and endorsement of this crucial effort.

At [www.RPAforAll.org](http://www.RPAforAll.org), you can read the letter and factsheet RPA sent to the 50 states' main land-grant universities from March 31 to May 8, 2003, asking them to begin the task of eliminating animal agriculture from their schools (or request them from RPA). Those documents and others at the website detail animal-industry environmental problems, and we are glad to recommend additional sources.

**Going in the Wrong Direction.** We might hope university animal-agriculture programs would insist on ecologically sound, sustainable, humane methods, but such hope is misplaced. The *Britannica Macropedia*, university websites & literature, and other sources agree that "animal science" – as most animal-agriculture programs call themselves – involves increasing animals' "efficiency" and "productivity" for industry profits. Thus, universities drive the problems much more than they seek solutions. Despite much desertification from overgrazing, human beings have long known how to raise small numbers of chickens, pigs, and other animals on small farms without harming ecosystems. "Improvements" through research – along with growth of the human population, affluence, and advertising – make animal-agriculture training a big environmental problem.

RPA agrees with Thomas Berry's essay "The American College in the Ecological Age": "Business has a great mission to fulfill in establishing a viable economy for the human community by integrating the human economy within the renewable cycles of earth economy." But universities at present subordinate ecological training to the overriding priorities of helping students build careers in the animal industries and obtaining industry-funded and -supporting research grants. 10,000 Years Is Enough does not target programs that teach sustainable methods, but there is no such thing as a sustainable animal-based diet for all humans. Polluting and resource-wasting animal industries, though, seek to spread themselves worldwide. University-bestowed corporate welfare helps them.

The National Research Council's 1996 book *Colleges of Agriculture at the Land Grant Universities: Public Service and Public Policy* vaguely warns, "If the world's expanding population is to be fed and clothed at a reasonable cost and without further degradation of the natural resource base or environmental quality, then ... more sustainable ways to produce food ... must continually be sought." That *should* mean no more animal agriculture, but the committee that authored the book probably avoided specifying current unsustainable practices because of its many university and animal- and feed crop-industry members.

**Conflict of Interest.** Young people need thorough, up-to-date knowledge of nutrition, ecology, animal exploitation and abuse, sustainable food-production methods, and other matters that would lead them to question the animal industries' legitimacy. Most likely, universities' pandering to the animal



industries prevents students from receiving the training they need in those areas. Universities' promoting the obsolete animal industries and their reluctance to promote sound eating habits consistent with current knowledge may be contributing to the persistence of widespread "diseases of affluence" and the obesity epidemic that threatens the wellbeing of even very young Americans. Whatever may be limiting progress in these areas, we know that not one university has refuted even one aspect of RPA's case for ending the teaching of animal agriculture.

One indication of how much importance universities place on serving industrial animal agriculture as opposed to ecologically and nutritionally sound or humane food production is the ranking of "the top 10 universities serving the meat and poultry industry" by *Meat & Poultry: The Business Journal of the Meat and Poultry Industry*. Using a favorite Internet search engine, you can quickly locate the November 2002 ranking, articles about it, and universities' press releases and website postings about it. Universities are boastful, not apologetic, about being selected, and they do not make the list by promoting sustainable methods.

Here are a few "winning" traits from *Meat & Poultry*: "big in terms of students enrolled in industry-related courses (approximately 550 each year)" (Texas A&M); "[g]iven the school's proximity to the industry's biggest player (Tyson Foods, Inc.), it is little wonder that the Poultry Products Technology program is among the best ..." (University of Arkansas); "near the top of any list of institutions serving the industry, with an emphasis in pork education and research" (Iowa State University); "[u]nlike many of the other institutions on this year's list, C.S.U. does not have slaughtering facilities on campus, but does maintain an array of meat science labs ..." (Colorado State University)."

To be sure, the colleges of agriculture typically teach environmental science and nutrition, too. But luring industry money and attracting students with the promise of industry jobs far outweigh public service. Jobs are primarily available in the multi-billion-dollar animal industries, not on tiny "sustainable" or "organic" farms. Much research is funded by the industries, and the industries' main interests are in getting the largest possible financial return on each animal facility with the least possible expenditures on environmental protection or other "externalities."

The land-grant universities' websites (easily located by university names) and that of CSREES – the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service ([www.reeusda.gov](http://www.reeusda.gov)) – are among the readily available venues of boasting about the universities' long and consistent records of preparing students for employment in the animal industries. Placement in the most polluting and resource-wasting industries is celebrated as much as in less destructive ones. Far from challenging ecologically unsound U.S. animal-industry practices, a July 8, 2003, article in Iowa State University's newspaper ([www.iowastatedaily.com](http://www.iowastatedaily.com)) shows that school's Sustainable Rural Livelihoods program "going through a careful process of looking at countries in Latin America and Africa" to teach sustainability!

As environmentalists, we must ask, What is there to recommend perpetuating animal agriculture at public institutions – other than nostalgia or habit? After all, not only did our species' adoption of agriculture turn out to be an earth-shaking departure from our original ecological niche (though returning to a gatherer-scavenger-hunter existence is neither desirable nor possible); domesticating animals and removing them from their niches further disrupted ecosystems. Farming vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains, and legumes and phasing out animal agriculture and feed crops makes the most sense for feeding a large human population already depleting and contaminating its resources. Working together, we can get our universities out of the meat, dairy and egg businesses that hamper the rich lives we want for ourselves, our families, our neighbors, and people yet unborn.

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