

BEEF SUSTAINABILITY: MYTH VS. FACT

MYTH

FACT



■ Cattle are one of the leading sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

■ Beef cattle are only responsible for 2% of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S.¹



■ Beef comes from factory farms.

■ More than 90% of cattle farms are family-owned and operated.²



■ Cattle compete with people for food.

■ 90% of what cattle eat is forage and plant leftovers that people can't eat and would otherwise go to waste.³



■ We grow 100 million acres of corn just to feed cattle.

■ In 2020, corn used to feed grain-finished beef cattle represented only 7% of harvested corn in the U.S. or 5.5 million acres.^{4,5}



■ It takes up to 24,000 gallons of water to produce a pound of boneless beef.

■ It only takes 308 gallons of water to produce a pound of boneless beef.⁶



■ Cattle degrade land.

■ Cattle provide important ecosystem services, such as preserving open spaces and providing habitat for wildlife. The value of these services totals approximately \$1,000 per grazing animal.⁷

1. EPA. 2021. Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2019. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C.

2. US Department of Agriculture. 2017. Census of Agriculture. <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/index.php> List of Reports and Publications | 2017 Census of Agriculture | USDA/NASS.)

3. Brooks, Ashley et al. 2017a. Carbon Footprint Comparison between Grass- and Grain-finished beef. OSU Extension, AFS-3292.

4. NASS. 2021. Steers and Heifers Commercial Slaughter GE 500, 2019/2020. Found on USDA/NASS QuickStats Ad-hoc Query Tool.

5. USDA NASS. 2021. Crop Production 2020 Summary. Found on: Crop Production 2020 Summary 01/12/2021 (cornell.edu)

6. Asem-Hiablle, Senorpe et al. 2018. A life cycle assessment of the environmental impacts of a beef system in the USA. The International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment.

7. Maher, Anna et al. 2020. National and State Economic Values of Cattle Ranching and Farming-Based Ecosystem Services on Federal and Private Lands in the U.S. Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable Publication, Number 7. <http://www.sustainableangelands.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/B-1367.pdf>

