Dear

International Finance Corporation
International Monetary Fund
UN Food and Agriculture Organisation
European Investment Bank
European Bank of Reconstruction and Development
BNP Paribas
JP Morgan Chase
Bank of America
HSBC
Royal Bank of Canada
Citigroup
Santander
Morgan Stanley
Société Générale
Deutsche Bank
Rabobank
ING Group
Credit Suisse
NatWest
Lloyds
Standard Chartered
World Bank

Post-Covid Economic Recovery: the need to move away from industrial crop and livestock production and to support forms of agriculture that are genuinely sustainable

As the world seeks to 'build back better' after COVID-19, it is widely recognised that we need to rethink our relationship with the natural world and to treat it, and the creatures within it, with more respect. This will involve reshaping the way in which we feed ourselves.

We urge intergovernmental organisations to recognise the need to move away from industrial livestock production, including industrial aquaculture. We also urge major financial institutions not to fund or invest in such production. This is essential to minimise the risk of future pandemics. It is also necessary if we are to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, water pollution and antimicrobial resistance.

Industrial livestock production risks further pandemics: Many studies show that with its crowded, stressful conditions industrial livestock production contributes to the emergence, spread and amplification of pathogens, some of which are zoonotic.[i] [ii] [iii] The last global pandemic before COVID-19 emerged from farm animals; this was the 2009 swine flu pandemic.[iv]

Industrial farming can also have an indirect effect on the emergence of new viruses. Industrial animal agriculture needs huge amounts of soy and cereals to feed the animals. This leads to the expansion of farmland into forests and other wildlife habitats. This closer contact between people and wildlife can lead to pathogen spillover with viruses being transmitted from wild animals to people.[v]

Industrial livestock production contributes to antibiotic resistance: Globally, around 70% of all antibiotics are used in farm animals.[vi] Industrial production depends on the routine use of antibiotics to prevent the diseases that are inevitable when animals are kept in poor conditions. This leads to antibiotic resistance in animals which can then be transferred to people, so undermining the efficacy of antibiotics in human medicine.

The link between industrial livestock production and environmental degradation: Industrial livestock's huge demand for grain as feed has fuelled the intensification of crop production. This, with its monocultures and agro-chemicals, has led to soil degradation,[vii viii] biodiversity loss, including the loss of pollinators,[ix x] overuse and pollution of water,[xi xii xiii] and air pollution.[xiv xv]

Industrial livestock production undermines food security*:* 40% of the world's grain is used to feed farm animals[xvi]; they convert this very inefficiently into meat and milk.[xvii xviii] If this grain were instead used for direct human consumption an extra four billion people could be fed.[xix]

Industrial livestock production contributes to climate change*:* Industrial production has fuelled a huge increase in meat consumption in much of the world. Yet many studies stress that without a big decrease in global meat and dairy consumption it will be very difficult to meet the Paris climate targets.[xx xxi]

Health problems: The high levels of consumption of red and processed meat that have been made possible by industrial animal agriculture contribute to heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers.[xxii, xxiii, xxiv] The World Economic Forum states that reducing meat consumption would be beneficial both for human health and the environment".

Industrial livestock production undermines small-scale farmers in the developing world: In 2018 the then Director General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization said: "FAO estimates that more than half of the world's rural poor are livestock farmers and pastoralists … We need to make sure that smallholders and pastoralists will not be pushed aside by large capital-intensive operations." [xxv]

Solutions: agriculture that works with nature

We need to move to regenerative forms of agriculture: These can minimise the use of pesticides and artificial fertilisers, while in some cases enhancing productivity, by supporting - and harnessing - natural processes. The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the European Commission identify agro-ecology, agro-forestry, organic farming, silvo-pastoral systems and low-intensive permanent grassland as sustainable practices.[xxvi xxvii] We should restore the link between animals and the land in rotational, integrated crop-livestock farming. Such systems are able to store carbon, restore soils and biodiversity, and reduce the competition between agriculture and forests.[xxviii]

To minimise disease risk and antibiotics use, we should move to **health-oriented systems for rearing animals** in which good health is integral to the farming method rather than being

propped up by routine use of antibiotics. Health-oriented systems would avoid overcrowding and excessive herd and flock size,[xxix] [xxx] minimise stress[xxxi], ensure animals can engage in their natural behaviours[xxxii], maintain good air quality[xxxiii], and avoid early weaning of pigs[xxxiv]. Such systems would also respond to our ethical obligation not to harm the farm animals who provide us with food and to ensure that they are able to have a range of positive experiences in their lives.

We urge you to no longer support or fund industrial livestock production in light of the risks outlined above.

Yours sincerely

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Bill McKibben
Prof Maureen E. Raymo
Prof Richard Templer
Joanna Lumley OBE
Dr David Suzuki
Bishop John Arnold
Prof Joy Carter CBE
Prof Dave Goulson
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Rabbi David Rosen KSG CBE
Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall
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Prof Carl Safina
Sir David Madden
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Prof David Clough
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Prof Tim Lang
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Prof James Serpell
Lady Katya Lester
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Revd. Prof Elizabeth Stuart
Prof Carola Strassner
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Prof Richard Read
Prof Culum Brown
Marc Abraham
Michael Pellman Rowland
Noelle Harrison
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