



# Lecture d'actualité : la durabilité de la production de viande fraîche et séchée en Italie

**Le projet “viande durable” en Italie : aspects nutritionnels, sécurité alimentaire, impact environnemental, bien-être animal, économie circulaire, et lutte contre le gaspillage alimentaire**

**Mots-clés :** durabilité, débat, Italie

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**L'ouvrage décrit dans cet article se présente comme un outil scientifique à destination de toutes les personnes intéressées par un débat objectif sur la question de la production et de la consommation de viande, sans préjugés ni discours idéologique.**

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## **Résumé :**

Cet article est un résumé d'un ouvrage publié en 2019 et présentant le projet pour une viande durable né en Italie en 2012. Il expose le point de vue de la filière professionnelle sur la question de la production et de la consommation de viande. Réunissant les principales associations de producteurs, le projet a pour objectif d'attirer l'attention sur les engagements des différents opérateurs du secteur en Italie, proposant ainsi un point de vue dans le cadre d'un débat constructif et transparent, exempt de préconçus et guidé par le souhait d'une analyse scientifique et objective.

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## **Abstract: The sustainability of meat and cured meats in Italy**

This article is a summary of a book published in 2019 and presenting the project for sustainable meats set up in Italy in 2012. It presents the point of view of the professional sector on the issue of meat production and consumption. Bringing together the main producers' associations, the project aims to draw attention to the commitments of the various operators in the sector in Italy, thus offering a point of view in the context of a constructive and transparent debate, free from preconceived ideas and guided by the wish for an objective scientific analysis.

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## INTRODUCTION

The consumption of meat is increasingly subject to attention and criticism principally linked to nutritional, ethical and environmental reasons. The organisations and stakeholders participating in this international debate are inspired by different motivations: there are animalist and/or environmentalist associations, research centres, media, etc. Within this context, at least in Italy, the point of view of meat producers has never been introduced; they should instead participate in the discussion by providing information, details and objective data useful to correct, where necessary, some positions that are on occasions prejudicial or not completely correct.

The Sustainable Meat project was born in 2012 with the objective, of uniting the main Associations of producers. The intent is to bring to people's attention the results of the

commitments of the various operators of the sector offering a point of view for a constructive and transparent confrontation, free from preconceptions and extreme positions, and driven by the desire for scientific and objective analysis. The purpose is not to convince those who for personal reasons choose not to consume meat, but to inform those who include animal proteins in their diet, conscious that a balanced consumption of meat is sustainable both for health and for the environment. Analysing the sustainability of meat and cured meats means studying, in the most objective way possible, different topics concerning both the consumer and livestock production. For this reason, the contents of this book analyse nutrition, environmental impacts, food safety and animal welfare, economic aspects and food waste.

## WILL WE SAVE THE PLANET BY NOT EATING MEAT?

We have heard it repeated for years: to win the fight against climate change we must banish meat and cured meats from our tables. Yet, for however praiseworthy it is to want to contribute to stopping the ongoing climate chaos, the decision to convert to veg will not only, not save the planet, but it is also a profoundly wrong message, for several reasons.

The most evident, if we consider the data on the emissions of greenhouse gases, is that the production of meat and cured meats (including the cultivation of food, breeding, and processing) is responsible for 15- 18% of emissions according to the statistics published regularly by the FAO ([www.fao.org/livestock-environment/en/](http://www.fao.org/livestock-environment/en/)). This leads to the consideration that an individual's choice, such as not eating meat, cannot solve the problem above all if you ignore all the others responsible for the current climate crisis, like the transport and energy sectors that affect the remaining 65-70%.

Reminding us of this, is not a meat fan, but Professor Michael E. Mann, a climate scientist, "Distinguished Professor" of Penn State University as well as one of the authors of the famous Climate Change Report of the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Until today, he, perhaps better than anyone else, illustrates the point about the climatic upheavals in progress. Referring to the "despotic" idea of the American multinational WeWork to banish meat from all its employees, Mann reminds readers how objectively absurd it is to think of helping the climate in this way. WeWork, or rather, its billionaire CEO and founder Miguel McKelvey, not only forced his employees into this choice, which appears rather ideological than eco-sustainable, but he did it stating that this change in the menu is for example much more useful than using a hybrid car. An affirmation that is inaccurate under many points of view, but also deceptive. "Fossil fuels are left out of the discussion. Accepting implicitly the idea that climate solutions are voluntary measures", explains Mann to NBC News: "They are important. But it is really frustrating for me when they say to eat less meat".

According to Professor Mann, who recently wrote another excellent book against climate negation, "The Madhouse

Effect", it is much more important to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels rather than not becoming vegetarian. This is true especially if, as WeWork does, one concentrates only on meat and cured meats without instead considering foods that have equal impacts on the environment, nor by banishing eggs and cheese which generally have upstream breeding just like meat products.

"It is incredibly irresponsible to suggest that hybrid cars do not represent an important step in the fight against carbon emitters", emphasizes the Penn State professor. Equally irresponsible is advising individuals not to eat more meat, I add, neglecting the damages which this can cause to health, especially in certain age groups. All this encourages the belief that the fight against climate change can be exempt from precise political and economic choices.

A mistaken message also because whoever promotes it is probably not familiar at all with the agricultural and livestock sectors and therefore does not know that "there exists in reality responsible ecological ways for producing meat", as Mann emphasizes. In Italy we know something about this, since (I know from direct experience) we vaunt one of the most sustainable livestock models on the planet, also thanks to the commitment made in promoting good practices. Furthermore, "if all farms all over the world would adopt good practices - concludes Mann - the percentage of carbon emitted 'from the farm to toilet' could be reduced from 18% to only 10%". Not enough, if you want to save humanity.

Passing off the veg choice as more sustainable on an environmental level, but never considering the contribution of the livestock sector in preserving landscapes, territories, traditions and cultures is one of the most superficial, inaccurate and indeed irresponsible messages of our time, which seems to have breached the common imagination. It is therefore pleasing to see how also scientists that deal seriously with the defense of the climate finally take a position against the rampant and senseless anti-meat obsession of the western world.

## INTENSIVE OR EXTENSIVE, IS THIS THE PROBLEM?

Meat has been a part of human nutrition since the dawn of human history.

For hundreds of thousands of years, hominids have based their livelihood on the products of hunting and plants grown spontaneously; subsequently the progressive reduction of hunting and gathering in favour of agricultural practices laid the foundations for the birth of agriculture. With it man modified both his lifestyle, which from predominantly nomad became stable, and his eating habits along with the management of the environment settled. The first forms of animal domestication were accompanied by cultivation practices. These animals were selected and bred to help work in the fields and to provide food, wool and leather. Nutrition became more and more varied, with bread, cereals, fruit, vegetables, fish and meat.

With the passing of centuries, first the roman-barbarian influences, then the mediaeval, the idea of meat consumption as an essential requirement for a healthy diet are strengthened. Meat remains a longed for and desired food over time, even if there were variable consumption habits depending on historical period and social class. Until the 13th century the practice of an agro-silvo-pastoralism offered a diversified diet and made meat accessible to the whole population. Successively one assisted in the formation of a gap between the rich and varied nutrition of the nobles in the cities, and that of the rural population where economic difficulties relegate the consumption of meat to festive occasions only. The culinary culture of the countryside is developed as a consequence, giving precedence to cereals, bread, legumes and vegetables, and devising recipes to reuse all the edible parts of the animal, minimising waste.

The scarcity of meat in the nutrition of the rural population remained constant up to the early twentieth century. In Italy, this only began in the 1960s when the strong economic development increased the consumption of meat, which became the symbol of liberation from misery and poverty. To cope with the growth in population and food consumption an intensification of meat production was undertaken: the food industry was structured to meet the increase in demand, on farms the password became production efficiency. Since the eighties, in Italy, the consumption of meat has stabilised and, on the basis of a well-established food security, we are witnessing a changing sensitivity on ethical issues, such as animal welfare and the environmental impacts of farms.

In this context, current consumption on a worldwide level is to be evaluated by taking into account both global factors and data related to various eating habits in the world. There is no doubt that the growth of the world population, forecasted at being more than 9 billion individuals in 2050, compared to over 7.5 billion currently (in 1960 it was around 3 billion), will inevitably result in a greater demand for food and in particular for animal proteins, for which an increase is foreseen of around 60%. In evaluating current global meat consumption, however, it is not just the absolute value that needs reflecting on as instead the extreme difference between the average consumption per capita in various areas of the world, with values ranging from about 120 kg/year in North

America to less than 40 in Asia and Africa. The context has therefore changed profoundly over the years and today's need is to guarantee food for everyone on sustainable economic and qualitative terms. The crossing of these concepts with those of intensive breeding is, therefore, inevitable, which is probably the main object of contention of those who debate on the sustainability of livestock production.

But it is necessary to clarify what is meant by the concept of intensive: more often one tends to link the intensity of a breeding farm to number per surface unit and animal space. This type of approach is outdated and needs a methodological update, for which agricultural economy can offer some solutions. The intensity of a breeding farm, in fact, can be defined by basing the relationship on the direct cost of labour and the total costs, the so called "capital intensity". The lower this relationship is, so with a low incidence in the labour cost compared to the total, the more the farm can be considered as intensive, that is capital-intensive; on the contrary when labour costs become a primary factor we are facing an extensive usually consisting of small family-run businesses.

This approach is thus incoherent with the typical equation "many animals in a small space equals intensive farming". There are bovine or sheep farms, with thousands of animals, where animals have a lot of space at their disposal (think for example of the farms in Australia or Ireland), while family-owned farms have very few heads confined to very restricted surfaces. Judgment on the quality of breeding should therefore not be based on the concept of the intensiveness or extensiveness of capital use in the livestock enterprise but on its objective characteristics that are a consequence of the breeder's behaviour. It is more appropriate, therefore, to distinguish between good and bad breeders. With intensive farms, considering the economic meaning of the term, breeders have a greater availability of resources, also economic, that can (when they are good breeders) be allocated to maintaining and improving the conditions of the farms. In order for a breeder to valorise at best his farm animals, he must in fact take care of their welfare; maintaining a good state of psycho-physical health in animals is an indispensable requirement in guaranteeing adequate living conditions, but it is also a crucial element to guarantee the security of the foods derived from them.

A meat of quality with the ability to achieve a higher sales price derives, in most cases, from "economically" intensive managed farms by longsighted farmers who are capable of investing in safety and food quality, on processes and farm innovation. Obviously, in all this, it is also the consumer who plays an important role: if the choice of meat, and in general of food, is driven solely by research for saving it is very difficult to guarantee adequate remuneration for the players in the supply chain, foremost the breeders. The challenge the meat sector must face today, is that of a greater "sustainable" offer that can guarantee an efficient production, attentive to the environment and the welfare of animals, breeders and all those who participate in the creation of value in Italian supply chains.

## Références du livre

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF MEAT AND CURED MEATS IN ITALY: NUTRITIONAL ASPECT, FOOD SAFETY, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, ANIMAL WELFARE, CIRCULAR ECONOMY, FIGHT AGAINST WASTE [ISBN-13: 9788891793324]

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