

# *Beef, Bread and Water: ethical food in a warm and thirsty world*

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# *Imagine.....*



- Human health issues
- Increase pressure on critical resources: water, land
- One of single largest contributors to anthropogenic climate change
- Very negative impact on welfare

- Highly problematic ethical and pragmatic issues associated with meat consumption and production
- No-one deliberately set out to produce such a damaging system
- Meat consumption on the rise



# *Two points about ethics:*

- 1) No such thing as an ethics *free* meat/food production system
- 2) Ethics not just held by individuals
  - Also embedded in systems, structures institutions etc



- Ethic implicit in industrialised worlds' meat/food systems?



- Economic goals/values take priority
- Acceptable to prioritise economic goals even at a high cost to human health, animal welfare, environmental impact, etc



- Stern: climate change is the biggest market failure we have ever seen
- Similar point re meat industry
- Tweak or challenge the implicit ethics of the market?

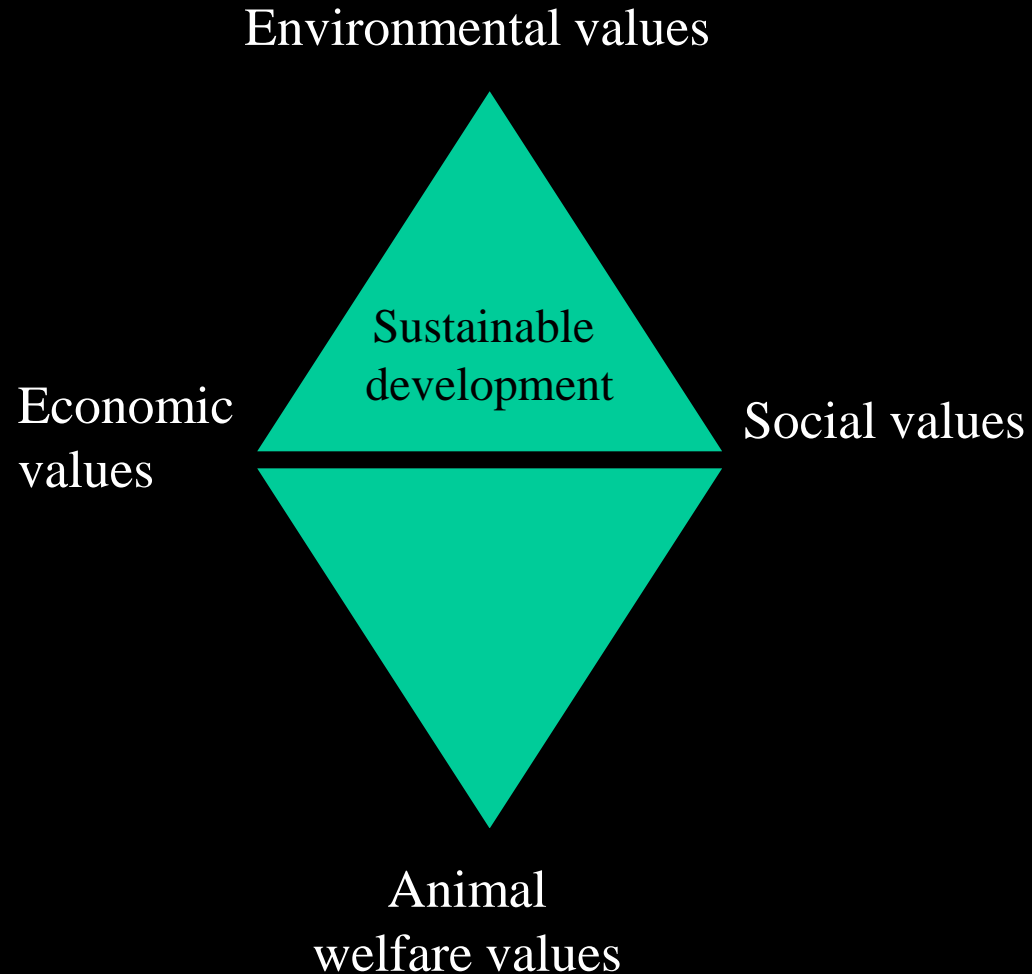
# *Tweak....*

- Tweak = consumer choice, product labelling etc
- Profit/short-term profit inevitably takes priority in market-lead system
- Food not ‘just another business’
- Need to deliberately intervene in the light of different values



# Challenge!

- Values that *should* drive the meat/food industry?
  - Economics
  - Environment
  - Society
  - Animal welfare
- ‘Diamond’ values
- Ethics: economics should be in service of society, environment, animal welfare



- Positive goals
- Prohibitions
- No trade-offs in relation to ethical bottom-lines
- Deontological rather than utilitarian
- Creative response to prohibitions
- But we **DO NEED** prohibitions



# *Meat in context...*



- Stunningly unsustainable approach to meeting our needs
- Denial of ‘inconvenient truths’:
- Earth resources are bountiful but do have limits
- Earth capacity to absorb human pollution also has limits
- Trajectory of industrialised and industrialising worlds is crashing us into these environmental limits

# *Environment not a luxury...*

- Estimated 50% of all wild species extinct by 2100 if rise of 4 degrees C
- Not just about 'charismatic megafauna'
- Our ability to meet our basic needs under threat
- Impact on Millennium Development Goals
  
- Nature 'not a luxury to be enjoyed at the weekend'



# *Ethics not a luxury....*



Good planets are hard to find

- Need profound changes in the ethics and values that underpin our meat production system
- Because that is the right thing – current ethics unacceptable
- Because we are in big trouble if we don't

# *Ethics in context...*



- Unacceptable ‘food-system ethics’
- Embedded in flawed world-view
- That underpins unsustainable approach to meeting our needs
- Environment and animals seen purely as resources for (some) humans
- Staggeringly anthropocentric
- Humans detached from environment
- Magical notion of indefinite growth on a finite planet



# *The Good News*

- We still have time
- Food is relevant to everyone
- Individuals, governments, corporations, business, organisations can all play immensely significant roles
- We know what needs to be done
- We are (allegedly!) the most intelligent, creative species on the planet...

