**Green New Deal proposes eliminating “farting cows”**

Agriculturalists work to share the facts about beef sustainability following Rep. Alexandria Osacio-Cortez’s introduction of the Green New Deal, which proposes eliminating farting cows.

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Last week, Rep. Alexandria Osacio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) released the details of the “Green New Deal,” which promises to eliminate all U.S. carbon emissions while remaking the U.S. economy.

The Green New Deal suggests we ditch air travel in favor of railroads, rebuild the nation’s buildings entirely, provide every person with a living family wage, socialized healthcare and more.

**Related:** [4 facts on cows & climate change that can’t be ignored](https://www.beefmagazine.com/beef-quality/4-facts-cows-climate-change-can-t-be-ignored)

**The socialist policy package also suggests we eliminate “farting cows,” as seen in the Green New Deal FAQ,**[**which you can read here.**](https://apps.npr.org/documents/document.html?id=5729035-Green-New-Deal-FAQ)

The freshman senator says, “We set a goal to get to net zero, rather than zero emissions, in 10 years because we aren’t sure we’ll be able to fully get rid of farting cows and airplanes that fast.”

**Related:** [Study ignores nutritional factor when evaluating climate impact](https://www.beefmagazine.com/beef-quality/study-ignores-nutritional-factor-when-evaluating-climate-impact)

The website for the Green New Deal was taken down over the weekend. I imagine the incessant roasting this scary piece of legislation drummed up was more than the 29-year old former bartender could take.

However, before Osacio-Cortez pulled the plug on her site, there was no shortage of people breaking down the document, which promised to “secure for all people of the United States for generations to come — clean air and water, climate and community resiliency, healthy food, access to nature and sustainable environment.”

The Green New Deal promises to work “collaboratively with farmers and ranchers in the United States to remove pollution and greenhouse gas emission from the agricultural sector as much as is technologically feasible by supporting family farming, investing in sustainable farming and land use practices that increase soil health, and by building a more [sustainable food system](https://www.beefmagazine.com/beef/eat-lancet-recommends-slashing-red-meat-consumption-90) that ensures universal access to healthy food.”

[Read the document by clicking here.](https://www.npr.org/2019/02/07/691997301/rep-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-releases-green-new-deal-outline)

**My first thought when I read about Osacio-Cortez’s Green New Deal was the old adage, “Never approach a bull from the front, a horse from the rear or a fool from any direction.”**

Yet, as an agricultural industry we have a choice to make. We can either choose to be proactive and try to educate Osacio-Cortez and her supporters about the environmental and nutritional benefits of beef production or we can spend our time laughing at the radical things she says and griping about her ignorance.

Admittedly, it might be tough to find common ground. She’s hardly a champion for the American cattle producer. Just last week, Osacio-Cortez visited a school in Queens and [according to Veg News](https://vegnews.com/2019/2/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-urges-kids-to-save-the-planet-by-ditching-meat-and-dairy), she offered suggestions to the student on how to combat climate change including, “Give your tummy a break! Skip meat and dairy for a meal—easiest is breakfast; I do banana and peanut butter.”

Kansas rancher Brandi Buzzard Frobose does a great job of reaching out to Osacio-Cortez in a recent blog post titled, “An Open Letter to Congresswoman Alexandria Osacio-Cortez From a Kansas Rancher.”

Buzzard Frobose writes, “As a beef producer in rural Kansas working with my family to raise cattle, I feel the need to point out some facts about agriculture that were misrepresented in your Green New Deal. As a rancher, I am proud to produce safe, healthy and affordable beef for a hungry nation. We are producing beef in the United States more sustainably and efficiently than ever before — did you know that the U.S. produces nearly 20% of the world’s beef with only 9% of the world’s cattle? That’s pretty amazing and tells a great story of our efficiency using the resources available to us!”

[Read her entire letter by clicking here.](http://www.buzzardsbeat.com/2019/02/an-open-letter-to-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-from-a-kansas-rancher.html/?fbclid=IwAR2u9bsYY-_yAu9D9fJhBDoXHzjpFk1xF60mBWEp_rRGn-U1cYkpPy-gnrA)

Despite the misinformation being perpetuated by the Green New Deal, I think producers have a great opportunity to talk about beef [sustainability with consumers](https://www.beefmagazine.com/ranching/how-vegans-got-it-wrong-cattle-climate-change), on social media and in communications with elected officials. Thankfully, there are countless resources at our disposal to share this important information with ease.

**Take, for example, these facts from Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner.**

1. Beef production, including the production of animal feed, is responsible for only 3.3% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the United States.
2. Cattle only consume 2.6 pounds of grain per pound of beef, which is similar to pork and poultry, and nearly 90% of grain-finished cattle feed is inedible by humans.
3. Corn going to feed beef cattle represents only 10% of harvested corn grain in the United States, or 8 million acres.
4. It only takes 308 gallons of water to produce a pound of boneless beef, and water use by beef is around 5% of U.S. water withdrawals. Plus, this water is recycled.
5. The United States produces the same amount of [beef today](https://www.beefmagazine.com/outlook/truth-about-jay-z-beyonc-s-vegan-diet-recommendation) with 33% fewer cattle compared to 1977.

"It seems like every week or so, another group releases another proposal or call to 'Do Something' about climate change – such as the so-called 'Green New Deal' that was recently released," said Colin Woodall, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) senior vice president of government affairs. "Unfortunately, many of these proposals are often lacking in specifics, which makes it very hard for us to develop substantive responses.”

Last week, NCBA released its Cost/Benefit Principles to help consumers make better-informed decisions on issues like climate change. In a nutshell, these six points of NCBA’s Principles ask policy-makers to “prove” the intended results of their climate change proposals while also giving reporters a great set of questions to ask when they are covering these topics.

"Despite all the progress we've made on the environmental front in recent decades, some policymakers still seem to think targeting U.S. beef producers and consumers will make a huge impact on global emissions," Woodall said. "That's why we drafted our Principles – to give the folks who are proposing new public policies the opportunity to outline the specific costs and estimated benefits of their proposals.”

**NCBA’s Cost/Cost/Benefit Principles for Climate Change Policy Proposals include:**

1. Explain specifically what policy changes you are proposing.
2. Estimate as specifically as possible how much each of these policy changes would cost taxpayers, consumers of specific energy sources (automobile drivers, residential electricity users, airline travelers, etc.,) food consumers, and specific targeted industries/business owners, etc. Again, please be as specific as possible, and please detail costs on a monthly and annual basis for each affected group mentioned above.
3. Estimate how much CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced by a date certain (of your choosing) if your proposed policies outlined in Question 1 above were to be fully implemented.
4. Estimate how much global temperatures would be changed by the same date certain you use in Question 3 if your policy recommendations in Question 1 were to be fully implemented.
5. If any of your policy proposals are intended to reduce the consumption of beef, please detail specifically how much additional land must be converted to crop production in order to fill the protein-intake gap, i.e,, the difference between average protein intake via current beef consumption and what would have to be produced and consumed to keep protein-intake levels consistent under an all- or mostly vegetarian or vegan diet. Also, please identify specifically where this land is located, and how much additional GHGs would be released into the atmosphere by converting current pasture land into crop production.
6. Please show all your math for your estimated costs, emissions, average global temperature, and land conversion data outlined in Questions 2, 3, 4, and 5.

"These are very straightforward questions that any concerned citizen or reporter should be asking anyone who proposes new climate-change policy," Woodall concluded. "What specifically are you proposing, how much will it cost, how much will it affect global temperatures down the road, and how did you arrive at those numbers? Seems like anyone who is proposing billions or trillions of dollars' worth of policy changes should be happy to answer those questions. Yet for some reason, few currently are.”

At the end of the day, the Green New Deal may seem far-fetched and frankly, outright terrifying; however, it provides a real glimpse at what our urban consumers think about climate change, [agriculture](https://www.beefmagazine.com/commentary/beef-sustainability-it-matters-your-consumers-and-it-matters-you), food production and livestock. If we are to continue to produce beef to feed a hungry planet, it will be up to us to bridge the gap through respectful conversations where we share research and educational resources, as well as our personal stories of our family farms and ranches. Let’s get to work.