

Avoiding meat and dairy is 'single biggest way' to reduce your impact on Earth

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Biggest analysis to date reveals huge footprint of livestock - it provides just 18% of calories but takes up 83% of farmland



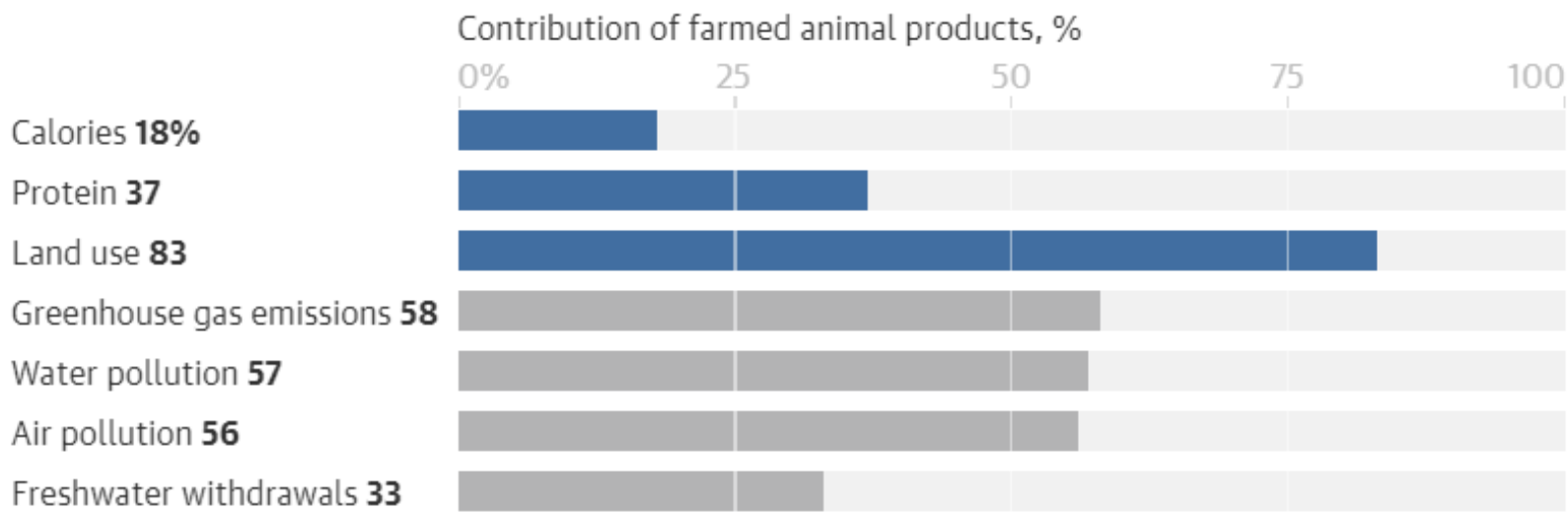
📷 Cattle at an illegal settlement in the Jamanxim National Forest, northern Brazil. The 1.3m hectare forest is today a microcosm of what happens in the Amazon, where vast areas of land are prey to illegal woodcutters, stock breeders and gold miners. Photograph: Antonio Scorza/AFP/Getty Images

Avoiding meat and dairy products is the single biggest way to reduce your environmental impact on the planet, according to the scientists behind the most comprehensive analysis to date of the damage farming does to the planet.

The new research shows that without meat and dairy consumption, global farmland use could be reduced by more than 75% - an area equivalent to the US, China, European Union and Australia combined - and still feed the world. Loss of wild areas to agriculture is the leading cause of the current mass extinction of wildlife.

The new analysis shows that while meat and dairy provide just 18% of calories and 37% of protein, it uses the vast majority - 83% - of farmland and produces 60% of agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions. Other recent research shows 86% of all land mammals are now livestock or humans. The scientists also found that even the very lowest impact meat and dairy products still cause much more environmental harm than the least sustainable vegetable and cereal growing.

More than 80% of farmland is used for livestock but it produces just 18% of food calories and 37% of protein



Guardian Graphic | Source: Poore and Nemecek, Science

The study, published in the journal Science, created a huge dataset based on almost 40,000 farms in 119 countries and covering 40 food products

