INDUSTRIAL ANIMAL AGRICULTURE:

another form of extractivism in Latin America

Industrial animal agriculture refers to the breeding, raising, slaughter, and processing of farmed animals, as well as operations related to feeding these animals.

It is an industry that does not recognize animals as sentient beings.



In 2022, 80 billion pigs and chickens were slaughtered around the world, and that number continues to grow.

Its impacts are global:

- It is the industry responsible for the greatest destruction of the planet's ecosystems, including the Amazon.
- It is the second-largest driver of the climate crisis, after fossil fuels.

This industry is monopolized by large corporations that destroy rainforests and wildlife habitats in highly biodiverse territories: they pollute water, clear forests, grab land, allow animal suffering, and enable the persecution of communities.

It is a model based on extractivism: producing in Latin America mainly for consumption in the Global North.



COLOMBIA

Indigenous territories transformed for industrial animal agriculture

Since the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas in 2016, industrial animal agriculture has grown exponentially. During the armed conflict, FARC members kept indiscriminate forest clearing at bay. Since their departure, paramilitary groups and corporations have cleared the rainforest to introduce large numbers of cattle, often making it an ideal "business" for money laundering.

Turning this territory into vast industrial farms means clearing forests and displacing the Indigenous peoples and wild animals that have historically inhabited them.



Cattle farming in the Colombian Amazon

In Guaviare, the number of large cattle herds doubled between 2016 and 2023. This is home to the Nukak, Colombia's last nomadic people. With the arrival of extensive cattle ranching, they have lost their territory, their cultural practices, and ancestral foods such as açaí berries, ice cream beans (guama), and cumare (chambira palm). Meanwhile, their access to drinking water sources is limited because most have been fenced off for factory farms.

These cattle belong to a European species that is not adapted to the tropical climate. The region's clay soil leaves their hooves infested with parasites, causing pain and disease. **To take the cattle to market, a 190-kilometer stretch of rainforest was cleared across five Nukak settlements to build a road known as the "Trocha Ganadera," or "Cattle Trail." Every day, cows are transported along this road for up to twelve hours, exposed to harsh weather, only to be slaughtered.**

Wild animals also suffer: jaguars, owl monkeys, and harpy eagles are among the endemic species threatened with extinction by habitat loss.



Pigs and animal feed production in the Orinoquía region

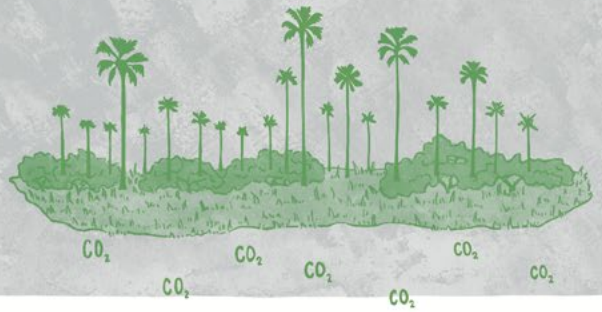
In the Meta province, Aliar-Fazenda owns 50,000 hectares of land, where it grows soybeans and corn to make concentrated feed for pigs raised on its mega-farms. The company slaughters 880,000 pigs each year, producing 100 million kilograms of meat.

This is the territory of the Sikuani people, known for the biodiversity of its rivers, which are home to more than 700 fish species. But pollution from waste discharges has contaminated these waters: **fecal coliform bacteria levels in the Muco River now exceed the legal limit by a factor of 1,500.** As a result, the Sikuani have been forcibly displaced from their territory, stripped of their fishing culture and economic livelihood.



These impacts affect the entire biome: moriche palm wetlands and seasonally flooded savannas have lost their endemic wildlife, including lesser anteaters, opossums, foxes, Orinoco geese, and yellow orioles.

These wetlands play a vital role in mitigating climate change, with a capacity to absorb carbon that surpasses that of the Amazon rainforest.





MEXICO

Yucatán: The peninsula of hog mega-farms

Yucatán, home to Maya peoples, is located in the Ring of Cenotes, an area of caves, groundwater, and tropical forests designated as a Protected Natural Area and a Ramsar site.

Industrial pig farming has expanded here rapidly from 2000 onward, following the introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Kekén, a corporation that has monopolized pork production, processing, and exports in Mexico, operates around 800 mega-farms in the region, each enclosing up to 50,000 pigs.

800 MEGA-FARMS **50,000 PIGS PER FARM**

55% of this production is exported to more than 14 countries on four continents, including the United States, South Korea, Japan, Canada, and China.



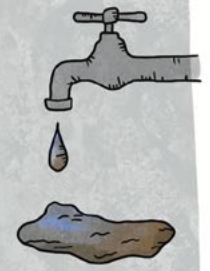


The mega-farms are located primarily in Indigenous territory, where national law requires prior consultation processes. However, no consultations have been recorded in the last ten years, and **90% of the farms operate without environmental permits.**

Sitilpech is one of the communities most affected by the mega-farms. Residents report that, since the mega-farm opened in 2017, there has been a constant smell of excrement, and trees have stopped bearing fruit.

Tap water causes illness.

The mega-farm discharges pig waste laden with antibiotics, fecal bacteria, excess nutrients, and organic matter into the area's aquifers—specifically, its cenotes. This waste seeps through the porous limestone into the groundwater that supplies drinking water to residents and other living beings in the area.



Maya communities resist Kekén

Residents of Homún brought a case before Mexico's Supreme Court detailing the environmental and human health damage caused by mega-farms. In doing so, they secured the closure of these facilities and the revocation of permits for another mega-farm in nearby Santa María Chí after three decades of pollution. They are now seeking legal personhood status for the Ring of Cenotes.

But their resistance has put them at risk: residents of Sitilpech protested in 2023 and were violently repressed by the police. To this day, some community leaders remain targets of harassment.





BRAZIL

Wildlife: The collateral victims of agribusiness

Brazil is the world's largest exporter of chicken meat and soybeans, the second-largest exporter of beef, and the fourth-largest exporter of pork.



Currently, more than 40% of Brazil's soybean harvest is processed into animal feed. This takes place primarily in deforested areas of the Amazon.

Wild animals are also victims of the industry. **Brighter Green has supported investigations into several recent cases:**

In Bahia, on a property used to grow grain for animal feed, a family of three maned wolves drowned in the farm's irrigation canals. These "artificial rivers," lined with slippery sheeting, do not prevent wild animals from entering and make it impossible for them to escape the water, causing them to drown.

The Pantanal, the world's largest tropical wetland, is home to animals on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, including jaguars, giant otters, marsh deer, and giant anteaters.

A wildfire can kill two to three animals per hectare, and in 2024 alone, 1.4 million hectares burned.





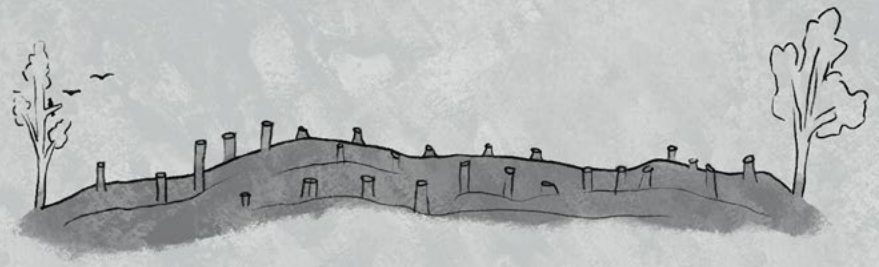
The fires that devastate biomes such as the Pantanal are often part of corporations' land-grabbing process: first, they clear the forest, then burn the plots to introduce cattle. The expansion of JBS, Brazil's largest meat corporation, has been shown to be linked to these fires.

While fires are an obvious form of destruction, corporations use other tactics to evade responsibility for their environmental and social impacts.





SLC Agrícola, a supplier of soybeans, corn, and cotton to agribusiness giants such as Bunge and Cargill, adopted a zero-deforestation pledge in 2021. However, tree clearing was identified on one of the properties it leases in Piauí, northeastern Brazil, in areas bordering the territory of the traditional Melancias community. Community members say that the owners of the deforested properties have illegally seized their land, in a legal dispute that has lasted ten years.



Extractivism is also present in factory farming and the production of animal feed.



Large corporations want to turn Latin America into a sacrifice zone and a source of resource extraction for the Global North. **Higher-income regions account for less than one-fifth of the world's population but consume more than one-third of all animal protein.** We cannot allow this.

Fighting extractivism means fighting a food production system that causes illness, destroys, and threatens our rights.



For our animals, communities, and territory.
For our planet!

More information:

Brighter Green

www.brightergreen.org

Text: Goldy Levy
Design: Daniela Mekler