

GIVING UP MEAT WILL NOT SAVE THE WORLD

The experts: “Enough fake news and half-truths”

- The emissions of greenhouse gases inherent to the production of meat cover around 10% of all the emissions in the world, while the fossil fuels used by the energy and transport sectors cover 65-70%
- European breeding farms are among those with the lowest emissions of greenhouse gas per kg of protein that is produced
- Italian vegans do a U-turn, representing less than 1% of the population
- Italian meat consumption per head is under the risk threshold of 500 grams per week

Bologna, 7 November 2018 – Four years after the publication of the first report on the sustainability of the Italian zootechnic sector, the **Carni Sostenibili Association** took a step forward by spreading the latest version, increased and updated, not just on the Web, but also in book stores. The book **“La Sostenibilità delle carni e dei salumi in Italia”**, published by **Franco Angeli** and presented today in Bologna in collaboration with ANA - Accademia Nazionale di Agricoltura, is a **reference point in the Italian media landscape on the production and consumption of meat and cured meats**.

Giorgio Cantelli Forti, Chairman of ANA, Accademia Nazionale di Agricoltura; **Giuseppe Pulina**, Agronomist, Full Professor in Special Zootechnics at the University of Sassari, President of Carni Sostenibili; **Elisabetta Bernardi**, Nutritionist, Biologist specialising in Food Science, Professor at the University of Bari; **Ettore Capri**, Full Professor in Agricultural Chemistry, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart; **Massimo Marino**, Environmental engineer and Administrator of LCE all took part in the presentation event. **Carlo Alberto Pratesi**, Professor of Marketing, Innovation and Sustainability at the Roma Tre University moderated the meeting.

Analysing the sustainability of meat and cured meat means **studying different topics that involve both the consumer and zootechnical production in the most objective manner possible**. This volume presents an **interdisciplinary study** for describing the **“5 sides” of meat sustainability**, represented by the same number of chapters: nutrition, the environmental impacts and the circular economy applied to breeding farms and industry, food safety and animal welfare, the economic aspects of supply chains, and the fight against food waste.

Easy to read, in spite of the complexity of some of the matters that are treated, this text rigorously faces some themes that are very dear to public opinion, often made more banal in **common places** and even transformed into **fake news**. Some examples? Meat and diet in the Mediterranean countries, **the real consumption of meat in Italy** and the world, the use of **antibiotics** on animals, **the relationship between meat and some illnesses**; or, considering the disinformation on this topic, what IARC and WHO said on red meat and processed meat and, obviously, the environmental impact of breeding farms.

We find out in this manner that **zootechnics is not the main cause of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere**: for example, just one flight from Rome to Brussels and back again generates more emissions than the **yearly consumption** of meat and cured meat of a single person who eats as indicated by nutritionists (500 kg vs 400 kg of CO₂eq).

“Giving up meat will not save the planet,” – commented **Ettore Capri**, Full Professor in Agricultural Chemistry at Catholic University of the Sacred Heart. *“The greenhouse gas emissions of zootechnical*

production (meat, milk and eggs) cover **14%** of all the emissions, of which only **10%** can be attributed to beef, pork and poultry alone (FAO). Generally, the fact that **65-70% derives from fossil fuels used for transport and for producing energy** is omitted. It is important to stress that Italy can boast **one of the most sustainable zootechnic models on the planet**, also thanks to its commitment to **promoting best practice**."

"The challenge of zootechnical production has become that of "producing more using less resources," said **Giuseppe Pulina, Agronomist, Full Professor in Special Zootechnics at the University of Sassari, and President of Carni Sostenibili**. "The objective that the meat sector must face today is that of a better **"sustainable" offer** which can guarantee efficient production that is careful with the environment and the welfare of animals, breeders, and all those who are part of the creation of the value of the Italian supply chains."

At the debate in Bologna, the **U-turn of vegans** was also confirmed (from 3% in 2017 to 0,9% in 2018 – source: Eurispes Data): the choice to **give up meat**, in fact, creates nutritional deficiencies, above all in the most fragile categories of the population, children and old people.

"Regarding the U-turn of vegans," continued **Professor Pulina** - "whose percentage is continually lowering among consumers, all that needs to be done is **look into the history of human food until the dawning of man's history** to understand how fundamental and essential meat is as a food. The development of the diet and food cooking are, in fact, two crucial elements in human development. After the discovery of fire, it was a meat diet that confirmed the primates of our species above others, allowing us to develop more, both physically and mentally, than all the other mammals."

"The role of meat and animal protein in a healthy, balanced diet is **essential during every phase of our life** - from pregnancy to child growth to old age - in order to stay strong and active," added **Elisabetta Bernardi, Nutritionist and Biologist with a specialization in Food Science, Professor at the University of Bari**. "The **Italian consumption per head** is below the risk threshold of the famous 500 grams of meat per week. While on this matter, the monograph published by IARC last June, three years after the alarmist anticipations published by The Lancet in 2015, showed that **only 14 out of 800 studies were judged to be reliable** and of these **only 7** related an **excessive consumption of meat** to rectal tumours. The epidemiologic studies considered by IARC take into consideration, as already said, a daily consumption of red meat in doses that are much higher than those we normally eat: we are talking about 500 grams of cooked meat per week, the equivalent of 800 grams of raw meat. It is a threshold that should not worry us, because in Italy, between pasta and vegetables, it is impossible to reach such high quotas of meat."

In the book, the **outlook for assessing sector impacts** in our country is guided by **objective parameters and for which increased scientific approval exists**. This is the case of the "**Environmental hourglass**", which evaluates the impacts of food lifestyles from a sustainability point of view. The **Environmental hourglass**, obtained by multiplying the environmental impact of food (for simplicity the **Carbon Footprint**) by the **weekly quantities** suggested by the INRAN, now **CREA**, nutrition guidelines, graphically shows that if you follow the intake recommendations suggested by the food model of the **Mediterranean Diet**, the average weekly impact of meat is **parallel to that of other food** with a lower unit impact, but which is consumed more. "The environmental hourglass represents the carbon footprint of the food eaten in a week," declared **Massimo Marino, Environmental engineer and Administrator of LCE**, "and demonstrates that **a balanced food regimen** is positive both for our health and for the environment."

Carni Sostenibili is the project promoted by three category associations - Assocarni, Assica and Unaitalia that represent all the meat supply chains in Italy (beef, pork and poultry). Its objective is to discuss all the matters related to the world of meat in a transversal manner: an unprecedented project in Italy which, by using a training approach, will contribute to balanced information on health, nutrition and sustainability. www.carnisostenibili.it