



Transformation

 MERCY FOR ANIMALS

TheTransformationProject.org

WHAT IS TRANSFARMATION?

transfarm verb

trans·farm | \ tran(t)s-ˈfärm

: to convert a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) into a sustainable, just, and compassionate plant-focused farm

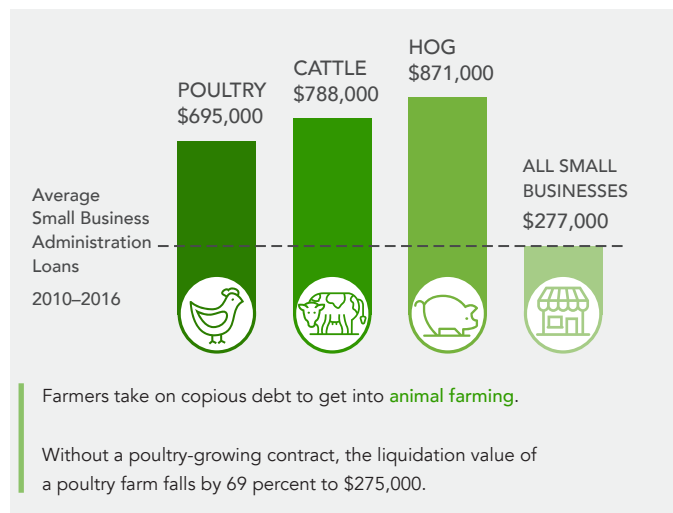
transformation noun

trans·far·ma·tion | \ ,tran(t)s-fär-ˈmā-shən

: the repurposing of a CAFO to help create a sustainable and compassionate plant-based food system

The Transformation Project aims to free farmers from the confines of industrial farmed animal production and help them become **co-creators of a new food future** by transitioning to more lucrative, sustainable, and **compassionate plant-focused farming**. The project's initial focus is chicken farmers.

WHY TRANSFARM? AND WHY START WITH CHICKENS?



Intensive chicken production has a massive negative impact on **humans, animals, and the environment**. Many farmers are bound by **restrictive contracts** with producers that are mostly vertically integrated, facing enormous debt and no way out.

THE TOURNAMENT SYSTEM

Chicken farmers are paid according to a tournament system that ranks them by how much weight the chickens put on with the least feed. Farmers who produce the largest chickens with the least feed are paid the most. This leads to highly variable paychecks, which further the financial insecurity of farmers already burdened by the hefty, high-risk loans they've taken on to start poultry farming.

POOR GENETICS COST FARMERS

The chicken industry selectively breeds birds for breast meat yield and growth rate, with little attention to animal welfare. As a result, conventional chickens suffer a range of welfare problems.

- High rates of **lameness** mean many chickens cannot walk without pain.
- Birds often die of metabolic diseases, like **ascites** and **sudden death syndrome**, or bacterial diseases, like **gangrenous dermatitis**, never reaching slaughter.
- Farmers bear the financial loss when their animals die.

BOOM IN PLANT-FOCUSED AGRICULTURE

Chicken farmers are trapped in this system at a time of increased consumer demand for plant-based products. Lawmakers have an opportunity to support farmers who are interested in supplying growing markets. As of October 2019, sales of plant-based meat had **surged to \$946.6 million**, just over 10 percent more than in the previous year, and they are projected to reach \$1 billion in 2020. Last year, Beyond Meat became the first plant-based meat company to go public and **broke stock market records**.

THE NEED FOR TRANSFARMATION

Transfarming will give farmers the freedom to grow food that is healthier, better for the environment, and more socially equitable.

BENEFITS TO SMALL BUSINESSES AND LOCAL ECONOMIES

- Transfarming is an opportunity for farmers to grow crops that are more viable and profitable than chickens—and more money for farmers means more money circulating through the local economy. Costly upgrades mandated by large companies, sometimes when a farmer has finally dug out of debt, cut into profits by making poultry farming expensive for the farmer.
- Transfarming would give small family farms more autonomy and choice.
- Transfarming would create agricultural jobs for local communities because harvesting crops requires more workers than raising chickens.

BENEFITS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

- Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables is linked to lower rates of **cardiovascular disease** and **diabetes**. Now more than ever, we need healthy, nutritious food.
- Vegetable farms are not associated with zoonotic diseases. Large poultry farms often keep over 100,000 animals in crowded, unsanitary conditions that **raise the risk** of outbreaks.
- Transformations would address racial inequity. Industrial farms are **disproportionately located** in communities of color and produce large amounts of manure and other pollution. This is linked to **increased rates of respiratory diseases**, like asthma, among these already marginalized communities.

BENEFITS TO ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Transformations will eliminate animal waste. Nutrient pollution, stemming from animal waste, is a major environmental problem associated with poultry production. Chickens in Maryland and Delaware alone produce about **42 million cubic feet of waste**, which is enough to fill the dome of the U.S. Capitol 50 times!
- Transformations will free up land and allow for soil regeneration and more food for people. Acre upon acre of arable land that could be used to feed humans is decimated for monocrops that feed billions of chickens each year.
- Transformations will end a great deal of animal suffering. Average commercial chicken farms house between 30,000 and 125,000 birds at one time—up to almost a million birds per year—in overcrowded, deplorable conditions. Chickens often live in dirty litter among dead or dying birds.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBILITIES?

We currently focus on three options for repurposing chicken houses:



HEMP

Hemp has rapidly gained popularity since being legalized in the 2018 farm bill. In fact, the **industrial hemp market** is expected to grow from \$4.6 billion in 2019 to \$26.6 billion in 2025—a 34 percent compound annual growth rate (CAGR).

From pharmaceuticals and food to building materials and biofuel, hemp has a multitude of uses.



MUSHROOMS

The **mushroom industry** is expected to be worth \$3.51 billion in 2027, a 2019–2027 CAGR of 7.7 percent.

Mushrooms are used primarily for food, but the medicinal properties of certain varieties are gaining attention.



HYDROPONICS

Instead of soil, hydroponic farming uses a nutrient solution in a water-based solvent to grow plants. Hydroponic systems produce a **great variety** of flowers, vegetables, and fruit.

The industry is expected to grow from \$8.1 billion in 2019 to \$16 billion in 2025—a **CAGR of 12.1 percent**.



Other Options

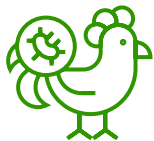
Our team is also working to identify options outside farming for repurposing chicken houses.



TRANSFARMATION AND PUBLIC POLICY



Several steps have been taken at the federal level to protect farmers from unfair business practices. The 2008 farm bill directed the USDA to draft regulations to strengthen protections for farmers. Twelve years later, those regulations are still being drafted. **Further action at the federal, state, and local levels is urgently needed to keep farmers out of crippling debt.**



Factory farms typically crowd animals in unsanitary conditions, increasing risk of zoonotic disease outbreaks. In a recent survey, we found that **50 percent of U.S. respondents saw a link between pandemics and raising animals for food.** Plant-focused farming does not pose this public health risk.



Governments have an opportunity to stream funds to farmers looking to transition to plant-focused agriculture. Without debt, farmers would have the means to repurpose their facilities to innovate and compete in other markets.



Transitioning large chicken farms would decrease racial inequity among your constituents and benefit the health of communities near industrial farms.



Governments should help poultry farmers transition to a more sustainable business model. Transitioned farmers would own their businesses outright, not just the facilities. They could create jobs and contribute to a robust local economy by choosing to grow more profitable crops.

