



## HEIDELBERG DECLARATION ON TRANSFORMING GLOBAL MEAT GOVERNANCE

From 15 to 17 January 2025, we, an international group of scholars and scientists from different disciplines, gathered at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law in Heidelberg to discuss the need for transformative meat governance.

In the past decades, a significant body of interdisciplinary research has been published on the negative impacts of meat production and consumption. While gaps in our knowledge remain, as scholars and scientists, on the basis of clear and compelling scientific evidence we state the following unequivocally:

The current extent of meat production and consumption has profound negative impacts on public health, the environment, workers and local communities, and animal welfare. Globally and in many regions, animal agriculture is a major driver of emerging zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and nitrogen pollution.

We recognise the ethical implications of, in particular, industrial meat production, and the responsibility of all relevant actors to work towards phasing out industrial meat production in favour of more sustainable food systems.

A significant reduction of meat consumption and production and a shift to more plant-based diets in high- and middle-income regions will make a positive contribution to public health, climate change mitigation, protection of the environment, and animal welfare.

Industrial meat production and consumption can be substantially reduced without threatening food security or violating the human right to adequate food.

The present global governance system is inadequate for addressing the adverse impacts of meat production. International law and practice on trade, subsidies, and investment sustain such production, and it is urgent to rework the structures and rules of international law that support the present patterns of meat production.

International law requires states to take appropriate measures to ensure that activities on their territory do not cause significant harm to other states and to areas beyond national jurisdiction. This fundamental principle applies to the negative impacts of industrial meat production, and calls for action for transitioning away from production methods that cause such transboundary impact.

To mitigate the harms of meat production, effective global governance is urgently needed. In view of the interconnected impacts of meat production on public health, climate change, the environment and animal welfare, such governance should be grounded in the concept of One Health, which recognises that such impacts should be addressed holistically.

A mix of strategies can drive the necessary shifts in consumption and production patterns. These include regulatory measures (such as higher environmental and animal welfare standards), economic measures (such as higher VAT for animal products, true cost pricing, and repurposing meat subsidies and tariffs to more sustainable and healthy alternatives), investment in alternatives (such as open-access research and commercialisation of alternative proteins), and behavioural measures (such as default plant-based meals, dietary guidelines, labels, and public awareness campaigns).

Achieving a transition away from industrial meat production and consumption will benefit from coalition building among environmental, public health, social justice, and animal welfare groups. It requires investing in a just transition for consumers, farmers, workers, and communities that may be affected by such societal change. It also requires international collaboration and support to facilitate a transition towards more secure, healthy, and sustainable food systems in lower-income regions.

It is crucial to support and invest in interdisciplinary research that furthers our understanding of the adverse impacts of industrial meat production and consumption and that develops innovative solutions for addressing such impacts.

Public and private actors at international, national, and local levels—including governments, businesses such as retailers and caterers, universities, public canteens, and international organizations—should work together to accelerate the transformation towards a sustainable food system that provides food security while protecting human health, the climate, the environment, workers and local communities, and animal welfare.

17 January 2025

Signed (in alphabetical order):

- **Prof. Einat Albin**, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- **Prof. Odile Ammann**, University of Lausanne
- **Dr. Laura Burgers**, University of Amsterdam
- **Dr. Elisabeth Bürgi Bonanomi**, University of Bern
- **Prof. Kirsi-Maria Halonen**, University of Lapland
- **Prof. Jennifer Jacquet**, University of Miami
- **Dr. Dr. Stefan Mann**, University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Bucharest
- **Prof. André Nollkaemper**, University of Amsterdam
- **Prof. Anne Peters**, Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg
- **Prof. Katharina Pistor**, Columbia Law School, New York
- **Prof. Cesare Romano**, Loyola Law School, Los Angeles
- **Dr. Friederike Schmitz**, Faba Konzepte, Berlin
- **Dr. Marco Springmann**, University College London
- **Prof. Kristen Stilt**, Harvard Law School, Cambridge
- **Dr. Saskia Stucki**, Zürich University of Applied Sciences & University of Zürich
- **Dr. Nicolas Treich**, Toulouse School of Economics
- **Cleo Verkuijl**, Stockholm Environment Institute