

# Growing Green

## *International*



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Stockfree organic: growing without animal inputs or chemicals ♦ [www.veganorganic.net](http://www.veganorganic.net)



# The farmer's footprint: vegan organics as conservation

by Lee Hall

People in affluent societies use a giant share of the planet's natural resources. Thus we generate much of its habitat-ruining pollution. The vegan organic model empowers us to withdraw from many harms caused by pollutants. Including greenhouse gases. With vegan organic methods we can reduce the presence of fossil-fuel inputs in agriculture.

The vegan organic path also brings us out of manure-based farming. It stands in contrast to the current trend of households 'going local' through the keeping of urban or suburban animals, such as goats and chickens. The promoters of the personal animal-husbandry trend won't mention that the new animal owners will be driving to the retail feed sellers, or that those stores, in turn, obtain feed that has been shipped many miles for mixing and packaging, and shipped again in distribution.

Animal farming generally depends on feed crops and, wherever crops are grown as feed, pesticides and manure applications are common. What is not absorbed into the crop fields seeps into streams, rivers, and bays – resulting in toxic algal blooms and ever-expanding dead zones that suffocate aquatic animals.

And the human habit of animal husbandry defeats the integrity of animal communities and habitat in other ways as well: because we see animals as rightly appropriated for human food, there's also the classification of free-living animals as game; there's our habit of moving various animals between regions (and then adding insult to injury by calling *them* invasive).

## The spread of animal agribusiness

Indeed, animal agribusiness can be understood as a traffic in introduced species.

Various websites, promoting the much-vaunted Highland cows of Scotland, tell potential investors: "The Highland's proven ability to produce top quality meat without the addition of expensive, high-quality feeds makes this breed the perfect choice for those people who wish to produce beef with natural inputs." In reality, these businesses superimpose their chattel – cows – upon the old-growth highland forest. On that land, there are no more wolves, and only a few hundred wildcats (at most) still cling precariously to life. The cows, bred from a mix of two kinds of stock cows, are now trendy elsewhere in Europe, and they've even been brought to North America. Everywhere they live they are introduced, as all farm animals are. And where they graze, the big carnivores are no more.

The annihilation of the big carnivores and the resulting imbalances comprise a warning against the spreading of animal agribusiness worldwide. And then there's our ever-growing quest for water and land space to hold our purpose-bred animals. Pastures holding sheep and cows – the placid landscapes of the countryside – are manifestations of our disinterest in leaving wild spaces for free animals.



*Scottish wildcat (drawing by Amanda Rofo)*

Everywhere we look, the urban landscape is expanding, roads are connecting rural life to industrial processing sites, and untamed spaces are no more. Just last year, the Scottish Wildcat Association revealed that the number of true Scottish wildcats still alive could be as low as 35. Conservationists have not succeeded in saving these beings. Vegan organic growing, more than any other human contribution, can honestly hold itself out as a boon to conservation – or, if the term is preferred, to animal rights. This is because it is frugal with land and water use, because it respects living beings' birthright to thrive, and because it's a work of reintegration. ■■■

*Lee Hall (a life member of the Vegan Organic Network) is an adjunct professor of environmental law in the United States, and also an author. Lee's next book (due out later in 2015) is 'On Their Own Terms: The Handbook. Animal Rights for the Classroom and the Community'. It's a thoroughly re-written, abridged, and updated edition of 'On Their Own Terms: Bringing Animal-Rights Philosophy Down to Earth' (2010).*

### Your legacy for the future, helping the work of the Vegan Organic Network

Would you consider benefiting the work of the charity by including a legacy in your will? Such gifts are currently tax free and are extremely helpful, making an enduring contribution to the promotion and continuance of vegan organic ideals.

Such legacies can be made by anyone, in the UK or anywhere else in the world, and are normally simple to insert in your will. You can consult your legal advisor, or for those resident in England or Wales we can supply a simple form of words for your will. Legacies of land and property can be made, in which case your qualified legal advisor should be consulted.