

Preface

Each of us came to this project out of personal concern and scholarly interest. We both have concerns, shared by many others, about how the meat industry has transformed over the past half-century, as it has become increasingly industrial in nature. Confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) are a central example of such techniques, bringing thousands of animals into small, confined, unnatural spaces. The growth of CAFOs has facilitated the sharp increase in the production of animals—cows, pigs, chickens, and fish—that are slaughtered to be consumed as meat. As the number of animals has increased, the pace of slaughtering terrestrial animals has likewise quickened, threatening the health of slaughterhouse workers who struggle to keep up with the faster production line speeds. We are therefore concerned with how this transformation has affected workers, farmers, peasants, consumers, and animals. In different ways, there are important reasons to be concerned for the health and well-being of these various groups, many of whom have suffered in increasingly violent ways at the hands of the meat industry. The changes in the meat industry have also threatened the environment by contributing to global climate change and by polluting local water sources, air, and land. This transformation of the meat industry even poses economic threats to farmers and smallholders (small farmers with limited land, labor, and capital), whose land and livelihoods are often at great risk. There is much to be concerned about.

This personal concern led to our scholarly interest in trying to understand the global dynamics of the meat industry over the past several decades. Our project began with a coauthored paper that aimed to outline the global patterns of meat production, consumption, and trade. We presented this paper at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society in

the summer of 2016, and the response was terrific. Not only did the paper draw much interest and many questions and comments, but also several scholars spoke with us after the presentation and offered to participate in the project. Analyzing the contours of the global meat industry was a task that many scholars wanted to join. As a result of this response, we decided to host a scholarly workshop as a first step toward an edited volume that would draw together the insights of several scholars. The two-day workshop was hosted by Georgia Tech, and it was supported by several partners around Georgia Tech's campus: the School of History and Sociology, the Brook Byers Institute for Sustainable Systems, and the SLS (Serve-Learn-Sustain) Fellows Program in Food, Energy, and Water Systems (FEWS). All of the authors in this volume participated in this workshop, presenting papers that would ultimately become the chapters in this book. We are grateful to the campus partners at Georgia Tech who helped us take this important first step toward this edited volume.

Edited volumes such as this one are different from monographs not only in the many voices and perspectives that they bring together but also because of the wealth of knowledge that lies behind them. The group of authors behind these chapters know, as a group, much more than either of us knew individually about the global meat industry. So this has been an important opportunity for us to better understand the global meat industry from different vantage points, and we are grateful for that. Edited volumes can be a bit trickier than monographs in the publishing world. Consequently, we appreciate Beth Clevenger, our editor at MIT Press, and her support and enthusiasm for this book all the more. Beth has also given us important guidance and invaluable comments and suggestions along the way. We are grateful for her support for this project and her patience with us as we worked to finish it. We thank Kathleen Caruso in her work on this book as Senior Editor at MIT Press, and we also appreciate Julia Collins for her tremendous work as the copy editor for this volume. We would also like to thank the three anonymous reviewers of this volume. Their feedback on an earlier draft of this work was invaluable. Finally, thanks to the coauthors of this volume who spent considerable time and energy on their chapters, including several iterations of revisions to ensure a coherent manuscript. Of course, any mistakes are attributable only to us.

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Social and Environmental Consequences of the Expanding Meat Industry

Edited by: Bill Winders, Elizabeth Ransom

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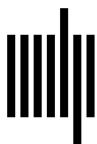
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