

existed in many parts of the world, most notably Europe, markets had to be opened, and this depended in part on corporate power and in part on a broader global shift toward free trade. Finally, this global shift toward free trade was pushed by corporations—including the feed grain industry in the United States—and countries that benefit from free trade (e.g., see Clapp 2003; Winders 2009, 2017). Thus, the three interconnected factors formed a foundation on which the meat industry could expand globally.

Consequences of the Global Meat Industry

The sharp increases in the global production and consumption of meat are not without profound consequences. As global corporate giants in meat processing have grown in size and reach, industrial animal farms have spread across the globe. Millions of acres of land have been converted to animal farming in the form of pastures, crops for feed, or as a reservoir for overwhelming volumes of animal waste; workers, animals, and the environment have all been negatively impacted. The expanding meat industry also has implications for issues such as world hunger. The reliance on feed grains—which diverts land and resources that might otherwise go toward food grains and legumes for direct human consumption—is one notable way that the global meat industry can contribute to food insecurity and world hunger, even as it contributes to greater food production. Of course, the food produced by the global meat industry is of higher economic value and therefore out of the reach of many people in poorer, food-insecure countries.

This growth of the global meat industry therefore generates three sets of concerns that undergird much of this volume: corporate concentration, the tension between producing cheap meat and reducing food security, and social and environmental injustices. First, there are political economic concerns regarding the size and power of corporations in the global meat industry. Global meat companies—such as Tyson, which is U.S.-based, and JBS, which is based in Brazil—exert significant influence over farmers, national governments, and many other groups. Unequal power between industrialized countries and poorer countries is also an economic concern, as some poorer countries produce and export substantial amounts of meat. Poorer countries producing large quantities of meat for industrialized countries can raise issues of especially weak environmental and labor regulations, as