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What's Our Strategy to Save Farm Animals?

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What's Our Strategy to Help Farm Animals?

Since the start of 2016, the Open Philanthropy Project has approved 82 farm animal welfare grants totaling \$47M to 50 grantees in 24 countries. So what's the strategy? In this newsletter I'll share some thoughts on how we think about farm animal welfare, our current strategy, and the impact some of our grants may be having.

But first I want to share some exciting news: Amanda Hungerford is joining our team this week as our Senior Program Associate for Farm Animal Welfare. We selected Amanda out of more than 70 strong candidates who applied, and were impressed by her intelligence, experience, and passion for farm animal welfare. Amanda grew up near factory farms in rural Nebraska, and has spent the last five years fighting them in the Humane Society of the US' Animal Protection Litigation team. She has degrees from Wesleyan University and Columbia Law School, and two cats. We're excited she's joining us — if you are too, you can email her at amanda@openphilanthropy.org.



A sow rescued from an Iowa factory farm relaxes in a mud pool. This is why the scale of factory farming matters: each of the billions of farm animals suffering is an individual like her. Source: personal photo.

How we think about farm animal welfare

Our primary goal at the Open Philanthropy Project is to give as effectively as we can to do the most good for others. That includes farm animals because we think (1) they're likely [moral patients](#) (2) [~30B](#) are confined on land and more than 100B in water at any time, mostly in miserable conditions, and (3) there are tractable and neglected opportunities to help them.

But that still leaves a lot of choices. Should we invest in clean meat or plant-based alternatives; advocate for reforms or abolition; promote veganism or reducetarianism? We're pragmatists, so the answer is normally we'll do what we think works best — but smart and compassionate people can and do disagree about what works best.

So our farm animal giving is guided by a few principles:

- **Our goal** is to reduce and ultimately end the suffering of farm animals. We want to help animals today by greatly reducing their suffering, and in the long term by eliminating the greatest causes of their suffering.
- **Our vision** is of a world where all animals enjoy “good welfare,” as ethologist Marian Stamp Dawkins [defines](#) it: “animals are healthy and have what they want.” We think factory farming is incompatible with that vision.
- **Our focus** is global, because animals suffer everywhere — 73% of our farm animal welfare grants (by dollars) are for work outside the US. But we prioritize geographies with the most intensively farmed animals and the greatest potential to help them. For instance, China ([7B](#) land farm animals), Europe ([2.9B](#)), and the US ([2.4B](#)).

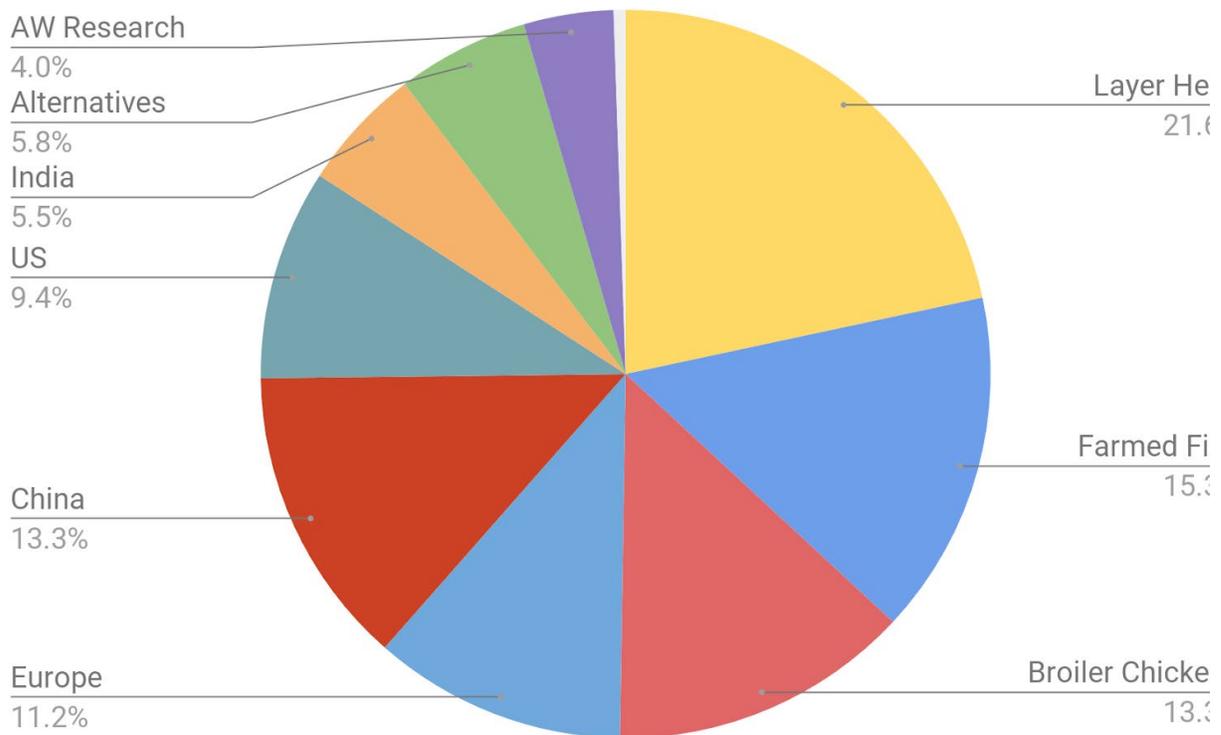
We don't expect these principles to change much over time. By contrast, we expect our strategy to change a lot as the world changes and as we learn. Here's our current thinking.

Our farm animal welfare strategy

We're focused on areas and interventions that we think can affect the most farm animals. That produces a three-pronged approach:

1. **Reform the worst abuses** of three of the largest groups of farm animals: layer hens ([7B](#) alive at any time), broiler chickens ([23B](#)), and farmed fish (50-165B vertebrates alive at any time — this is an updated number, based on the research of EA Matt Edwards). We've backed campaigns to eliminate battery cages for layer hens, to reform the breeds, living conditions, and slaughter of broiler chickens, and to elevate fish welfare as a policy issue.
2. **Build up farm animal advocacy** in four of the places most likely to affect the long-term fate of farm animals: China (16 [grants](#) to date), Europe (16), India (6), and the US (25). We've backed advocacy and movement building work in these places, which collectively account for almost half the world's land farm animals, half its human population, and two-thirds of its farmed fish.
3. **Advance research and technology** in the areas most likely to benefit farm animals: alternatives to animal products, animal welfare research, and research on effective advocacy for farm

animals. We've invested in [Impossible Foods](#) and supported the [Good Food Institute](#), funded [research](#) to improve the welfare of cage-free hens and to eliminate castration for pigs, and supported [studies](#) on veg messaging.



A breakdown of our farm animal welfare grant portfolio to date by the primary area each grant focuses on. Note that these divisions are messy: I've classified areas by their primary purpose, such that much European work focused on layer hens or broiler chickens is classified under those categories instead of "Europe". The "alternatives" category excludes our investment in Impossible Foods. This is out of the \$47M in grants committed to date.

How it's going

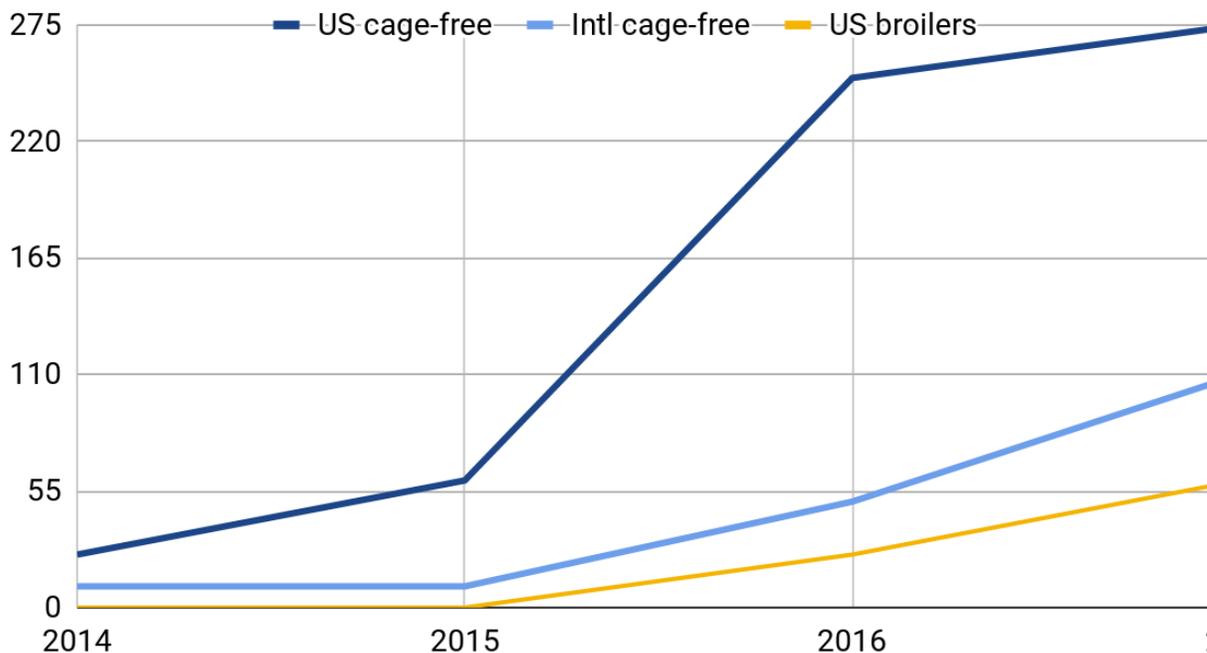
Mostly it's too early to say. We take a "hits-based" approach to much of our giving, and in many cases we hope to only see big wins in the long-term. But here a few things we're watching:

1. **Important milestones in key countries.** Indian advocates we support [helped secure new rules](#) on the treatment of animals at livestock markets, [official reports](#) endorsing an end to battery cages, and calls by [government ministers](#) for reform. Brazilian advocates we support secured 34 corporate pledges to eliminate battery cages. Chinese grantees helped organize three conferences, at one of which the Chinese [vice minister of agriculture](#) spoke, worked with [29 Chinese producers](#) to marginally improve living conditions for 92M animals, secured a [major pledge](#) to eliminate gestation crates, and gained [celebrity support](#) and donated ad space for a campaign promoting eating less meat.
2. **Building the movement.** Advocates we support have expanded their groups around the world, especially in China, Europe, India, and Latin America. We estimate that our grants have funded

about 190 jobs in the global farm animal movement. We've funded activist [bootcamps across India](#), advocate [summits in China](#), and [summits to end cages](#) in Europe and Latin America.

3. **Reform wins.** Advocates we support have secured pledges to eliminate battery cages from ~300 US food companies and ~160 European and Latin American food companies, including global pledges from giants like [Nestle](#) and [Unilever](#). We estimate these pledges, once fully implemented (which will require work), will spare ~375M hens/year from extreme confinement. These advocates have also secured pledges from ~80 US food companies to improve the welfare of ~65M broiler chickens alive at any time (that's ~500M chickens/year because each lives just [47 days](#) on average).

Million Chickens Alive At Any Time Set to Benefit From Pledges



This graph shows the number of chickens alive at any time set to benefit from pledges once implemented, based on when those pledges were secured. For instance, US cage-free pledges secured through 2017, once implemented, should spare 275M chickens/year from cages. Note that the broiler chicken number is adjusted by the average 47 day lifespan of a broiler chicken to make it comparable with layer hens. E.g. Compass Group's 2016 pledge, which should affect 27.6M broiler chickens/year once implemented, is counted as only 3.6M — the number of better-off chickens who will be alive at any point in time. Sources: personal compilation of corporate progress, USDA estimates, FAO statistics on live animals.

What do you think? If you have thoughts on our approach, strategy, or grants, I'd love to hear them via this [10 question survey](#) — please feel free to answer anonymously. Until next month, all the best!

Ps. A correction: in last month's newsletter, I misstated the revenue and name of ProVeg International. Their correct revenue for 2014 was \$1.5M and for 2016 was \$3M, and their correct name is "ProVeg International." I apologize for the error.

