

Americans are eating less and less meat

washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/americans-are-eating-less-and-less-meat/2012/01/11/gIQANUvmqP_blog.html

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(Source: Daily Livestock Report)

By Brad Plumer

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Meat eating in the United States is going out of style. According to a Department of Agriculture [report](#), Americans are projected to eat 12.2 percent less meat in 2012 than they did 2007. And it's not just the weak economy. As Mark Bittman [observes](#), there's a real long-term trend here: "Beef consumption has been in decline for about 20 years; the drop in chicken is even more dramatic, over the last five years or so; pork also has been steadily slipping for about five years."

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Why is this happening? The Daily Livestock Report [blames](#) rising meat prices in the United States. As countries like China and India get richer, they're eating more meat, which is helping to drive up U.S. exports and making beef, pork, and chicken more expensive here at home. Ethanol also plays a role: Nowadays, American farmers divert bushels and bushels of corn to make fuel, which drives up feed prices and, again, makes meat pricier.

Perhaps just as significantly, though, it does seem that attitudes toward meat are changing. More and more people [appear to be cutting back](#) on beef and pork consumption for environmental or ethical reasons. (Although before vegetarians get too excited, one factor that often gets overlooked here is the aging of the population — as the baby boomers get older, they've been [eating less meat](#).)

The Daily Livestock Report, for its part, blames government policy for waging a 40-year information campaign to dissuade people from eating meat. Bittman, on the other hand, finds that notion preposterous — he notes, among other things, that government agencies still shy away from recommending to people that they eat less meat. Read [his post](#) for a fuller dissection. The drop in meat-eating has come *in spite of* heavy government policies, which include heavy subsidies, not because of it.

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