

# COWSPIRACY: THE SUSTAINABILITY SECRET

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## MEDIA REVIEW

**Imogen Jackson**

N1003740@my.ntu.ac.uk

Nottingham Trent University, Student,  
Creative Writing

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‘In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends’<sup>1</sup>

When considering global warming and what we can do to help, we usually look towards environmental organisations. We presume they know the facts and figures; we rely on their advice and follow suit, for they are seen as the professionals in this field. However, director and narrator Kip Andersen, in the documentary *Cowspiracy*, claims these organisations hide, or are blissfully ignorant, to the truth of leading factors of global warming. He discusses how these organisations are more like memberships, and that the act of following a political agenda would be detrimental to their fundraising. Therefore, they ignore what Andersen reveals is the leading factor of global warming: livestock.

Andersen claims that ‘raising livestock produces more greenhouse gases than the

emissions of the entire transportation centre.’<sup>2</sup> Most people seem oblivious to this due to these companies not commenting on agriculture, fishing, or livestock as being a leading cause. A former *Green Peace* board director stated to Andersen that these companies are not telling the truth about what the world needs from us, and that despite the facts, refuse to act.<sup>3</sup> When confronting the governments environmental team, they claim that preventing people from eating as much meat is not a solution but a behavioural change. They also claim it is not under their jurisdiction.

One example Andersen produces is how the company *Rainforest Action Network* has a campaign against palm oil industries, something they claim is one of the leading factors of deforestation. However, we are presented with the facts that palm oil production is only responsible for the destruction of twenty-six million acres, whereas destruction of land for livestock is one hundred and thirty-six acres. Andersen points out how, on their website, there is no mention of cattle ranching or livestock despite the figures.

This is then repeated with other varying organisations that Andersen approaches. One such organisation being *Oceana*. Andersen discovered that three-quarters of world fisheries are exploited or over-exploited. Additionally, twenty-eight billion animals were pulled from the ocean in one year. This is too extortionate a number for the ocean to recover. Another fact given is that for every pound of fish caught in nets, five pounds of untargeted species – such as dolphins and sharks – are

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<sup>1</sup> *Cowspiracy*, dir. by Kip Andersen (Netflix, 2014)

<sup>2</sup> *Cowspiracy*, Andersen (2014)

<sup>3</sup> *Cowspiracy*, Andersen (2014)

caught. Despite these fishing facts, *Oceana* recommends the best way to aid the oceans is to eat more fish as the fishing market is in near collapse. According to *Oceana*, this is due to the dwindling population of species left.

Andersen shows his commitment to provide his audiences the truth through his extensive research into these topics, making his documentary intriguing and his statements more valid. He presents charts and figures, indicative of how livestock and cattle is detrimental to our land. Livestock produces more than one-hundred and thirty extra waste than the entire human population, with no benefit of waste treatment. Raising animals for food uses thirty percent of global water consumption, and forty-five percent of farming occupies Earth's lands contributing to ninety-one percent of Brazilian forest destruction. This is also the leading cause of habitat destruction and species extinction. This is what is being hidden by certain organisations who refuse to act on it and Andersen makes sure to hold them accountable with evidence.

Not only does Andersen bring to light these figures and shocking facts, but he also offers and seeks solutions. This is arguably the most interesting part of the documentary. It is easy for environmentalists to comment on the issues at hand, and less difficult to produce viable solutions. Andersen discovers how he can still be healthy and nutritious whilst cutting out meat and dairy completely. By doing either of these, he is reducing more emissions than if someone were to cut out driving or switching to a hybrid car.

As well as this, he visits farms that are producing food without the intervention of livestock. He finds that from one-hundred acres of land, where only three-hundred and seventy-five pounds of meat could be produced, thirty-seven thousand pounds of vegetables can be produced. In other words, by cutting out meat, less land space could be used. This would allow for the Earth to heal, forests and wild animals to heal and species to re-populate. It is a faster and more immediate solution than government's plans to reduce carbon emissions, which is estimated to take twenty years.

Overall, the documentary is intriguing and informative. It is valid in its argument. However, will it have an effect? Very unlikely. Despite this, it is a powerful documentary for those looking to change and willing to take the advice on board.

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