

McGreenwash



Caring about where your money goes

"Ethical consumerism" - that is, being careful about the ethics behind what you buy - has become trendy. Even *The Ethical Consumer*, has highlighted the growing trend towards this kind of careful shopping.

This has also led to a huge amount of so called "greenwashing" - an ecological or "green" form of "whitewashing" to positively influence public perception of a brand or product - by large corporations. They often make certain products appear more ethical than they are.

"the discovery [of ethical consumerism] by commercial giants is also leading to shallow 'ethics lite' products, stripped of their values and communicative power." [1]

McDonald's re-branding and marketing strategy

This can be seen in the recent re-branding of McDonald's, with stores around the UK literally having their colour scheme transformed from blood red to cucumber green, with a corresponding marketing campaign that shows animals wandering around in large green fields - implying that all of their meat is free-range and from British farms.

Their recent adverts shows happy cows and pigs to promote their British meat. But almost all of their chicken is sourced from outside the UK!

"Some 60% of the chicken breast meat used in sandwiches, wraps, burgers, salads and the copyrighted Chicken McNuggets is imported from Brazil. About 30% is sourced from elsewhere in Europe, including Holland and France, and nine per cent is from Thailand." [2]

This is particularly significant because:

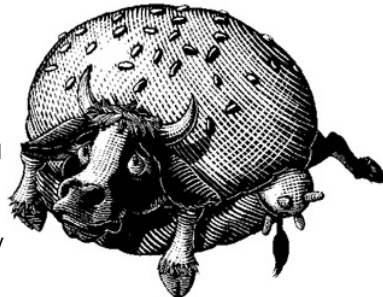
"up to half the meat eaten in McDonald's restaurants these days is chicken, said to be equivalent to 30 million birds a year" [2]

Likewise, on the McDonald's promotional website *Make Up Your Own Mind* - an apparent direct retaliation to *McSpotlight* (www.mcspotlight.org) - the corporation repeatedly states that:

"The beef we use is British and Irish and only whole cuts of forequarter and flank go into our 100% beef hamburgers." [3]

...which seems to reinforce their imagery of animals in expansive rural settings. In reality, **NONE** of their meat is free range, despite this being implied through their advertising: a fact only grudgingly admitted on the *Make Up Your Own Mind* site when consumers asked direct questions about whether McDonald's meat was free range. More general questions received responses simply focusing on their beef being sourced from the UK.

Similarly, their recent campaigns often depict beautiful British rural farms, with children playing around the hay and farm. They sometimes show hens in these adverts promoting their British meat - except, as stated before, not all broiler hens are British.



Free-range?

"The chickens used for meat in McDonald's products are called broilers, and are not free-range." [3]

Elsewhere, McDonald's dodges the issue of whether their pigs and cows are free-range, instead simply confirming that they are 100% British. British does **NOT** mean free-range.

Similarly, McDonald's proudly states that:

"British organic semi-skimmed milk is also used in all of our teas, coffees, Happy Meal milk bottles and porridge." [3]

Organic does **NOT** mean free-range. It also does not automatically mean that the cows were allowed to feed on the lush pastures shown in their advertisements, or even ever seen them throughout the course of their lives in factory farms.

And finally... a confession

Here McDonald's spells it out:

"Currently McDonald's uses free-range eggs and organic* milk, but at this point in time does not use free-range meat." [3]

* some - the milk in your coffee, but not necessarily all milk-based food ingredients, e.g. cheese

Finally, McDonald's attempts to suggest that mass-produced, factory-farmed methods are the only viable option to match their customer demands:

"However, at the moment, free range and organic suppliers are relatively small specialist markets which can't presently supply the large quantities that McDonald's UK would require." [3]

Satisfactory, free-range welfare standards are more expensive than a McDonald's 99p burger. But free-range meat and vegetarian food is a lot easier to swallow than factory-farmed meat and McGreenwash advertising.

Remember that in all animal farming systems there is extreme animal suffering. Your diet forces animals to work their bodies to the detriment of their health, abducting children from their mothers, stealing their bodily products, their freedom, and eventually, their lives.

TIME TO MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND!



Sources:

[1] Mayo, E., 2005. 'Foreword' in Harrison, R., Newholm, T., Shaw, D. (Eds). *The Ethical Consumer*. Sage Publications (London, UK), xvii-xviii.

[2] Edwards, R., 2010. 'Food campaigners' latest beef with old McDonald's farm: its foreign chicken'. *The Sunday Herald* (Scotland), 06 June 2010.

[3] McDonald's UK, 2010. 'Make Up Your Own Mind'. www.makeupyourownmind.co.uk, accessed 12 October 2010