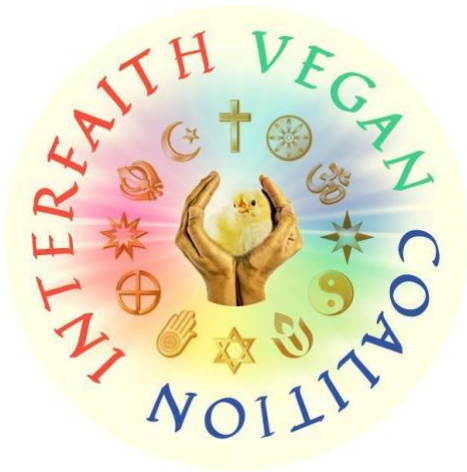


Catholic Agency for Overseas Development Criticized for its Animal Gifting Program
From [Interfaith Vegan Coalition](#)
September 2022

“It is time for CAFOD to realize that God loves all creatures, not just humans.”



LOS ANGELES (September 1, 2022) — A coalition of groups has formed to urge the **Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)** to end its animal giving program to honor

its commitment to climate justice and animal justice ahead of **Climate Sunday** on September 5, during the **Season of Creation** from September 1 through October 4.

Interfaith Vegan Coalition, In Defense of Animals, Plant Based Treaty, and Catholic Concern for Animals amongst others are challenging **CAFOD** to end its animal gifting program after a whistleblower discovered that **CAFOD** was appealing for money to replace those goats who were unexpectedly eaten by recipients. On August 18, the coalition sent a [letter to CAFOD](#) and an article on [7 Reasons Not to “Gift” Animals](#).

In a parish in Lancaster Diocese, a **CAFOD** representative explained in an email to its supporters last year that it needed to buy more goats because some recipients were eating them.

The coalition asked **CAFOD** how many goats have been eaten in this way and the number of occasions when **CAFOD** had sent an additional goat due to one having been eaten. In an email response on April 28, a representative of **CAFOD** stated, "It is not our policy to replace goats if the goat has been eaten."

“They do not say it is their policy not to replace goats who have been eaten,” said Virginia Bell of **Catholic Action for Animals**. “There is a difference. What I want to know is do they have a definite, written policy of *not* replacing goats who have been eaten? On the other hand, if it’s their policy not to replace eaten goats, then why did they go against this in Lancaster?”

The whistleblower told Bell that just before Christmas in 2021, a **CAFOD** representative explained in an email to supporters that **CAFOD** needs donations to buy more goats to replace ones who have been eaten by the recipient families due to hunger.

"This makes a mockery of CAFOD's claim that the practice of sending farmed animals is sustainable," said Lisa Levinson, Co-founder of **In Defense of Animals’ Interfaith Vegan Coalition**. “It is time for CAFOD to realize that God loves all creatures, not just humans.”

“While the rest of the world is beginning to understand that we have to transition from meat and dairy production and consumption to organic, plant-based production and consumption to combat the climate crisis, CAFOD is continuing to promote animal farming rather than being a leader in climate justice and ending their animal gifting program,” said Anita Krajnc, Global Campaigner for the **Plant Based Treaty**.

“CAFOD says that goats are sent to provide milk for the most marginalized people,” said Nicola Harris, Communications Director for the **Plant Based Treaty**. “These vulnerable animals are sent to vulnerable people - is it any wonder that things go wrong? It is because of short-sighted economic models like this that the planet is suffering an environmental emergency now. Other charities are showing a responsible attitude towards poor people, animals and the environment, such as A Well Fed World, Food for Life Global, Fruit Tree Planting Foundation and International Fund for Africa, by providing plant based food solutions. CAFOD needs to change.”

The **World Land Trust** calls animal gifting programs “madness....environmentally unsound and economically disastrous” and considers it “grossly irresponsible...to continue with these schemes....as a means of raising quick money for charities over the Christmas season.” According to the **World Land Trust**, gift animals will intensify environmental problems in areas of drought and desertification.

“Within two years, the people who get goats have an even poorer lifestyle,” said Maneka Gandhi, former **Indian Minister for Social Welfare and Animal Protection**. “A goat destroys the fertility of land and

milk or dung it may give is very little (in value) compared to the havoc it wreaks.” Gandhi also said, “a cow will drink up to 90 liters of water every single day.”

Climate Sunday and the **Season of Creation** were established to demonstrate our care for all of creation in prayer and action. To honor the **Season of Creation**, Pope Francis said, "Our common home, creation, is not a mere 'resource.' Creatures have a value in themselves and each one reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness."

From Pope Francis' prayers at the close of his Encyclical *Laudato Si'*:

- 1) Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognise that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.
- 2) Awaken our praise and thankfulness for every being that you have made.
- 3) God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth.

Several well-meaning organizations promote sending live farmed animals as “gifts” intended to reduce hunger and poverty in low-income countries. The true cost of sending a goat, cow, chicken, or other farmed animal is environmental degradation, soil acidification, water contamination, air pollution, global deforestation, forest fires, extreme weather, flooding, zoonotic disease outbreaks, health problems such as diabetes, more community slaughterhouses, and even childhood trauma from watching beloved animals get brutally slaughtered.

Last December, **Dr. Jane Goodall** along with fellow scientists, religious leaders, and celebrities urged the world aid charities to end animal gifting. Animal gifting programs hurt gift recipients by burdening them with more mouths to feed in areas where food and water are often scarce. They also worsen the climate crisis, decrease food stability, undermine sustainable development, contribute to animal suffering, and cause health impacts by promoting unhealthy western diets.

Video statement from Jane Goodall

The **Plant Based Treaty** and **In Defense of Animals’ Interfaith Vegan Coalition** implore charities to switch to plant-based aid programs which provide more food, and more stability by growing crops to eat directly instead of feeding them to animals. Plant-based projects can help alleviate poverty, reduce world hunger, and create sustainable practices for a healthy planet. **Thousands of In Defense of Animals** supporters and concerned citizens joined the campaign over the holiday season.

Dr. Jane Goodall says in her video statement:

In the lead-up to Christmas, many people are feeling generous and want to help those less fortunate than themselves. There are a number of organizations that have launched campaigns, suggesting that one way to help those suffering poverty and hunger is to gift them an animal, such as a heifer. As a result, farm animals are purchased in great numbers by generous donors. Unfortunately, this can result in unintended consequences. The animals must be fed and they need a lot of water, and in so many places water is getting more and more scarce thanks to climate change. Veterinary care is often limited or totally lacking. It will be ever so much better to help by supporting plant-based projects and sustainable irrigation methods, regenerative agriculture to improve the soil. Well this means charities must develop plans to create a gift package that will appeal to the generosity of those who want to help those less fortunate than themselves. Thank you.

The Stop Animal Gifting campaign includes open letters from [scientists](#) and [interfaith leaders](#) with endorsements from prominent scientists and religious leaders, action alerts, a petition and email letters calling on development charities, such as **Oxfam, World Vision, Heifer International and Cargill's "Hatching Hope" project, Christian Aid, Save the Children, Plan Canada, Lutheran World Relief, Feed the Children, Tearfund** and others to undertake [carbon disclosure](#) of their projects, stop animal gifting, and implement plant-based food system projects as a crucial step in addressing the escalating climate crisis.

Development charities can alleviate poverty and hunger by:

- Creating community seed hubs
- Rolling out water irrigation systems
- Providing training in permaculture and veganic farming techniques
- Reforesting lands and regenerating soils
- Planting trees to increase canopies to help improve the water cycle and restoring Savannah to rainforest and restoring key ecosystems