

46 Rue Proudhon
93210 Saint-Denis
France

Monday 8th July 2024

Dear members of the International Olympic Committee and Organising Committee,

We humbly write to you today as a collective of concerned world-leading sustainability experts, animal protection academics, environmentalists, athletes and animal advocates. We, the undersigned, share serious unease over your decision to include foie gras made by force-feeding on the [Olympic Games' hospitality menu](#). We strongly encourage you to please remove this dish from an event that inspires the world to accomplish wondrous things.

Condemned by many, force-feeding for foie gras has been widely criticised for decades for a number of reasons. We outline several of these below.

- **Animal welfare:** Each animal used for foie gras undergoes violent force-feeding up to 63 times during their lifetime. Thrusting a long metal pipe down the throats of caged and restrained birds in order to make them consume unnatural quantities of grain results in serious injury, psychological stress, and liver disease for these animals. Mulard ducks – widely recognised as being particularly nervous, fearful and hyperreactive – are most often farmed and slaughtered to produce foie gras. Scientific reports state: *'Birds show panic and flight responses to the approach of humans'* and are *'sensitive to the environment'* (Guémené et al 2002; Guémené et al 2006b; Laborde & Voisin 2013). Birds exploited for foie gras are killed at around 100 days old; considering the fact that a duck's natural life-span is 5-10 years and a goose can live up to 10-15 years, their lives are being cut short. Ducks in this industry live just 3-5% of their natural lifespan and geese 2-3% of theirs.

Olympic Games Chef, Charles Guillois, has publicly stated that he is not featuring foie gras on spectator menus since: *"Animal well-being is on everyone's mind"*. Why is this same sentiment not shared by hospitality caterers?

By serving foie gras to VIP guests, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is hypocritically signaling to the international community that it is willing to consciously condone and pay for undeniably wicked treatment towards animals.

- **Exclusionary:** The 'gavage' force-feeding process involved in producing traditional foie gras is so cruel that it is considered a crime in over a dozen countries, including Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, and the UK. The majority of citizens across France also recognize the extreme distress that foie gras production entails and are turning their backs on it, with a 2024 poll conducted by 30 Millions d'Amis Foundation discovering that 74% of 1515 French believe that force-feeding of animals is unjustifiable.

The IOC must use its influential position to unite the world, not divide it. You must not ignore the concerns of the global population.

- **Environmental degradation:** As the IOC rightly recognises, animal agriculture is a leading driver of the climate crisis: foie gras is no exception. This industry is resource-intensive, requiring copious amounts of corn for force-feeding practices. Cultivating and transporting corn and other monoculture grains for animal feed involves substantial water usage, as well as the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. These practices reduce biodiversity, deplete soil nutrients, disrupt local ecosystems, risk water pollution, and increase greenhouse gas emissions. Foie gras farms also require energy for heat, light, and ventilation purposes, as well as the disposal of manure management, which, if managed improperly, leads to reduced water quality and eutrophication of local waterways.

The IOC's menu choices must not pressure our world's precious and finite resources unnecessarily.

- **Human health:** The Olympic Games celebrate some of the healthiest and fittest individuals on the planet; to feature foie gras at such an event is, respectfully, an oxymoron. Foie gras is literally 'fatty liver' made from the deliberately diseased organs of ducks and geese. As a result, it is high in saturated fat and cholesterol, which can contribute to the development of heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

Worse still, foie gras poses risks not only to individuals but also to global public health. Given the cramped conditions in which the animals are kept, as well as the close contact with humans, these farms act as breeding grounds for dangerous zoonotic diseases to arise. So-called 'bird flu' has ravaged French flocks over recent years, with 304 outbreaks reported in 2023. While vaccines have reduced avian flu outbreaks of late, the cost of this was a staggering EUR 100 million, of which EUR 85,000,000 was funded directly by the state. This is a scandalous use of public money.

With fears that the virus could mutate into one transmissible to humans, particularly in light of the recent news that avian flu has now jumped to cows and from cows to humans, the IOC must not financially back this dangerous industry.

- **Alternatives exist:** As your team of leading chefs have discovered first-hand, there is an abundance of delicious, nutritious and sustainable plant-based alternatives available. Foie gras made by force-feeding is archaic and has no place in today's society, nor at the Olympic Games.

The IOC has made excellent strides by creating a 60% meatless menu. However, including foie gras is wholly unnecessary and undermines your efforts to date.

There is still time to do the right thing and take this cruelty off the Olympic menu.

Please, listen to science and listen to reason. After all of the effort and energy that you have put into crafting an innovative menu, do not let foie gras be your legacy.

Yours sincerely,

Sharon Núñez

President, Animal Equality

sharonn@animalequality.org

Co-Signed by:

1. Dr Marc Abraham OBE, Veterinarian
2. Vanille Victoria Ashkanovna, Country Liaison France, Animal Save France & Plant-Based Treaty France & DifusionV Luxembourg
3. Sonul Badiani-Hammett, Executive Director, FOUR PAWS UK
4. Dotsie Bausch, American former cyclist and Olympic silver medalist
5. Professor Jonathan Birch, Professor of Philosophy, School of Economics and Political Science (signing as an individual)
6. David Bowles, Head of Public Affairs, RSPCA
7. Max Broad, Executive Director, DC Voters for Animals
8. Dr Heather Browning, Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Southampton
9. Walter Caporale, President, Animalisti Italiani Onlus
10. Marcus Daniell, Professional tennis player & Olympic bronze medalist
11. Jelena Zoe Disić, Founder, Vege Zajednica
12. Dr Julien Dugnoille, Senior Lecturer in Anthropology (signing as an individual)
13. Bob Elliot, Director, OneKind
14. Gianluca Felicetti, President, LAV
15. Dr Tara Garnett, Food systems researcher (signing as an individual)
16. Juliet Gellatley, Founder & Director, Viva!
17. Brigitte Gothière, Co-Founder & Director, L214
18. Iain Green, Director, Animal Aid
19. Pamela Gross & Dr Charles Anderson, Founders, Law Scholars for Change
20. Reineke Hameleers, CEO, Eurogroup for Animals
21. Anne Hamester, Geschäftsführerin, PROVIEH e.V.
22. Peter Kemple Hardy, UK Campaigns Director, World Animal Protection UK
23. Professor Stevan Harnad, Editor, Animal Sentience
24. Kirsty Henderson, Executive Director, Anima International
25. Kathy Hessler, Assistant Dean, Animal Law (signing as an individual)
26. Connor Jackson, CEO & Co-Founder, Open Cages
27. Professor Andrew Knight, Adjunct Professor, Murdoch University School of Veterinary Medicine
28. Dr Christoph Maisack, First Chairman, Deutsche Juristische Gesellschaft für Tierschutzrecht e.V.
29. Dr Steven McCulloch, Senior Lecturer in Human-Animal Studies (signing as an individual)
30. Dr Alan McElligott, Associate Professor of Animal Behaviour and Welfare, Department of Infectious Diseases and Public Health (signing as an individual)
31. Dr Iain McGill, Director, Progressive Veterinary Association
32. Dr Andre Menache, Director, Progressive Veterinary Association
33. Dr Emma Milne, Veterinarian
34. Simone Montuschi, President, Essere Animali
35. Ben Newman, Co-Director, Animal Rising
36. Chris Packham, Conservationist, naturalist & Founder, Love and Rage
37. Massimo Pradella, President, OIPA
38. Dr Alessandro Ricciuti, President, Animal Law Italia ETS
39. Dr Carla Rocchi, President, Ente Nazionale Protezione Animali
40. Piera Rosati, President, LNDC Animal Protection
41. Taylison Santos, Executive Director, Fórum Nacional de Defesa e Proteção Animal
42. Joan Schaffner, Associate Professor & Faculty Co-Director, Animal Legal Education Initiative (signing as an individual)
43. Professor Pete Smith FRS, FRSE, Professor of Soils & Global Change (signing as an individual)
44. Michel Vandenbosch, President, GAIA
45. Professor John Webster, Professor Emeritus, University of Bristol

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