

# Organic meats found to have approximately the same greenhouse impact as regular meats

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A trio of researchers from the Technical University of Munich, the University of Greifswald and the University of Augsburg have found that the meat production process for organic meats produces

approximately the same amounts of greenhouse gases as does the conventional meat production process. In their paper published in the journal *Nature Communications*, Maximilian Pieper, Amelie Michalke and Tobias Gaugler describe their study of the impact of global food production on climate change and what they found.

As the planet continues to warm, researchers continue working to better understand the sources of [greenhouse emissions](#). In this new effort, the researchers looked at greenhouse emissions related to food production.

In looking at food production, the researchers placed [food products](#) into three main categories: conventional meat production, organic meat production and plant-based food production. They also took into account the emissions produced during different stages of the production process—emissions produced while growing and processing feed and fertilizer, for example, and methane released by animals and from their manure.

The data revealed little difference in [greenhouse gas emissions](#) from conventional meat production and that grown organically. They found that [emission reductions](#) by organically grown animals (in which fertilizer is not used to produce feed) were often offset by increases in methane released due to slower growth rates and the need to raise more animals, as organically fed animals tend to produce less meat. More specifically, they found very little difference in emissions between conventionally produced beef and beef grown organically. They also found that organically grown chickens produced slightly more emissions than those grown conventionally, and that organic pork produced fewer emissions than conventional pork.

The researchers suggest the need for [meat](#) taxes that reflect the environmental cost of their production. They calculated such a tax for conventional beef would raise its price by approximately 40% while

organic beef would see a price increase of just 25% (because it is already more expensive than regular beef). Prices for animal-related products, such as cheese or milk, would also rise. Prices for food plants, on the other hand, would remain nearly the same.

**More information:** Maximilian Pieper et al. Calculation of external climate costs for food highlights inadequate pricing of animal products, Nature Communications (2020). [DOI: 10.1038/s41467-020-19474-6](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-19474-6)

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