Man-made meat may be nutritious, but will it be delicious?

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Two Dutch professors have a plan to feed the world – with man-made meat.

It’s something scientists can make an unlimited amount of, they argue. It’s environmentally safe, and no animals would be hurt in the process.

The professors are bioethicist Cor van der Weele and bioprocessing engineer Johannes Tramper. They are from Wageningen University, the only university in the Netherlands dedicated to healthy food and the environment. They published an article about their plan on Tuesday.

As many parts of the world become richer, people will eat much more meat, they say. That will create more pollution. It will also use up too much energy and make animals suffer, they say.

Growing Your Own Meat

Their idea is to find other sources of protein. This could include more vegetables, fewer animals, and possibly eating insects.

Their other idea – hamburger grown in a lab – sounds almost good in comparison.
Van der Weele and Tramper see a day when every town grows its own meat.

This is how it would work. Muscle stem cells would be taken from pigs, cows, chicken, fish or other animals. Stem cells can grow into any kind of cell in the body. The cells would grow in 5,200-gallon tanks full of a seaweed-like plant, which would provide nutrients. Mechanical paddles would keep the solution in motion.

When there are enough meat cells — perhaps in a month — chemicals would be added to make them stick together. At that point, the mixing stops. The meat cells form small clumps and settle to the bottom of the tank.

Finally, the authors say, the tank is drained of the seaweed liquid. The remaining clumps of meat are pressed into a dense cakes and sold.

**But Would You Eat It?**

Meat grown in seaweed wouldn't save much energy, the authors wrote. But it would help prevent [global warming](https://www.newsela.com/?tag=global+warming). Man-made meat would also use up 90 percent less land and water compared to raising European beef cattle.

A tank could produce about 28 tons of meat a year, about 56,000 pounds. That equals the meat of about 112 beef cattle. In a year, a tank could feed more than 2,500 people.

Of course, there are some very real problems facing man-made meat. It could be expensive to make, depending on what it is grown in. Also producers would need healthy stem cells that would grow and grow.

Then there's the question of whether people will want to go anywhere near it.

The professors wrote that the fake meat would have to be dense. It would also have to feel like the real thing when a person bites into it.

They say the advantages of man-made meat are clear. But they can't promise anyone will want to eat it.