

Historically North America is one of the largest dairy consuming and milk drinking regions in the entire world (Valenze, 2011). However the statistics for liquid milk consumption in North America indicate that the demand for drinking milk has gradually decreased during multiple decades following the post-war era from 1946 onward (Canada, 2022). Why has milk consumption been experiencing gradual declines for so long, and what causes can be attributed to the declines? Enter the industry of what is known as corporate “big milk”. Many farmers are quick to blame the rise of non-dairy alternatives for the diminishing returns in the dairy industry today. This is one of many angles perpetuated by the corporate side of the dairy industry in an effort to further remove themselves from responsibility for the sustainability issues being faced in their industry worldwide (Taylor, 2021). The reality is that milk production capacity in North America had relatively outpaced the consumption demand as early as 1945, and producers have been pushing to sell as much milk as possible ever since (Insider, 2021). Instead of scaling down production the solution of the corporate dairy industry was to find new ways of promoting and selling more milk, while also using their size and influence to lobby against research into the negative aspects of the dairy industry (Taylor, 2021). Upon closer examination the three main contributing factors to the decline in milk consumption are often cited as the growing advocacy for animal rights, the growing concern of the dairy industries environmental impact, and the growing skepticism towards the health benefits of milk consumption.

As bodybuilding and muscle physique legend Arnold Schwarzenegger once put it: “Milk is for babies” (Baptie, 2013). Milk producing livestock are only able to lactate when induced by a pregnancy. For dairy cows to continuously produce milk they are required to be continuously bred or artificially inseminated in order to maintain their ability to lactate year-round (Taylor, 2021). This process has faced much criticism in recent years from both scientists and animal-rights activists. Researchers have estimated that approximately two-thirds to seventy percent of the human population does not possess the bodily ability to correctly process milk or dairy (Insider, 2021). This means that roughly two out of every three people are lactose-intolerant. Likewise among most mammalian animals, milk is only required in the early stages of development to provide the needed nutritional boost necessary to sustain development at a rapid pace. Once the stage from infancy into childhood is completed the need for milk becomes less apparent. Regarding humans the scientific evidence supporting this basis could be in the diminishing amount of lactase digestive enzyme found in individuals, which decreases with age starting after infancy (Taylor, 2021).

In addition to this, dairy cows produce as much affluent per day as over a dozen people and are one of the leading causes of deforestation and atmospheric methane pollution worldwide (Taylor, 2021). For example dairy conglomerate *Fonterra* is both the largest company and largest polluter in all of New Zealand, and within the last 20 years has been responsible for polluting nearly two-thirds of the entire countries waterways past the safe level for human or wildlife activity due to cow affluent (Taylor, 2021). Taking these factors into consideration, why do we

even drink milk at all? If milk is bad for us and the planet, why has it been so indoctrinated into society as something important to our growth and development? The answer lays behind the white lies of the corporations that own the colourful and wholesome looking dairy brands available on the shelves of nearly every supermarket in the world.

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