

American Food Industry Abstract

The American food industry has the important job of feeding 300 million Americans. To feed all these mouths they must produce an enormous amount of food. To produce this enormous amount of food and simultaneously make a good profit the American food industry resorts to methods that some would consider unethical towards the employees of the industry, the livestock from which the food is made, and American citizens who consume the food produced. This essay will attempt to clarify the motives of the industry that provides our sustenance and determine whether or not their actions are morally justified.

There are strong arguments to found on both sides of this issue. One must remember that the large food corporations are businesses. They must make a profit to stay afloat in our capitalist society. Even if their methods of providing food for us were deemed unethical, could they not be considered a necessary evil? After all they do have 300 million mouths to feed. Possibly the strongest argument on the side of the corporations is that there is perhaps no alternative currently to feed so many people.

The other side of the argument makes many relevant points as well, one of which is that the food corporations have profit-tunnel-vision and act purely from a business standpoint regardless of the moral sacrifices. This statement encompasses many of arguments against the corporations regarding livestock, workers, and consumers. Moral sacrifices for the sake of increasing profit include: inhumane methods of captivity, feeding, and slaughter of livestock, providing consumers with a nutritionless, unhygienic product that may cause disease, and taking advantage of workers who have no choice but to accept a job because they are so poor (some of whom are believed to be illegal citizens) as well as exposing these workers to conditions that harm their health. The side opposing the corporations also makes the point that all of the instances above are made possible by corruption in the FDA and policy-making institutions that favor the food industry.

This is obviously a very important, complex issue that requires dissection on more than one level. To truly determine whether the food industry is morally justified in their ways one must examine not only their methods, but American culture itself and the lifestyle it incites in us. To truly analyze this issue one must look into possible alternatives to the current system, the nature of capitalist society, and the American way of life.