Most Americans eat meat, but they have no idea where it comes from. And many of the large corporations that control the meat market in the U.S. would like to keep it that way!

**Fast-Growing and Fatter Beef Cows**

Today the top four beef packers control 85 percent of the market. Their names are Tyson, Cargill, JBS, and National Beef. These large corporations use practices that help them make more profit but are bad for the people who eat the meat and very cruel to the animals. Cows are supposed to be fed grass because grass is easy for them to digest. But when beef cows are 6 months to one year old, the farmers feed them lots of grain (like corn) to fatten them up. These grains are unhealthy for the cows, and so the farmers have to give them antibiotics to deal with their health problems. The corn is very acidic, which creates a good environment for bacteria to grow in the cow’s stomach. One of these bacteria, Escherichia coli or E. coli, is dangerous and even lethal to humans. Farmers also give the cows growth hormones so they make more meat faster. When you eat beef from factory farms, you are getting beef that is higher in fat and full of antibiotics and hormones.

**“Redesigned” Chickens**

What about chicken? Chickens are raised and slaughtered in massive processing plants. People like to eat white meat so they “redesigned” the chicken to have large breasts. Farmers keep a large number of chickens confined in small spaces and feed them hormones to make them grow faster. They grow so fat, they can’t even move. The growth hormones speed up their growth so much that they reach their full size in 49 days; under normal conditions, it would take 90 days. They also get lots of antibiotics to help them fight all the bacteria that grow in the massive, overcrowded, and poorly ventilated chicken coops.

**What Meat Should We Eat?**

I believe it’s healthier for consumers to purchase organic meats because they’re chemical and hormone free. Yes, organic meat is more expensive, but it is also healthier to eat less meat in general. So eating less meat but eating organic could work out for your budget.