

The True Cost of a Hamburger

in the United States

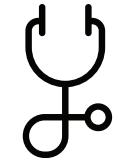
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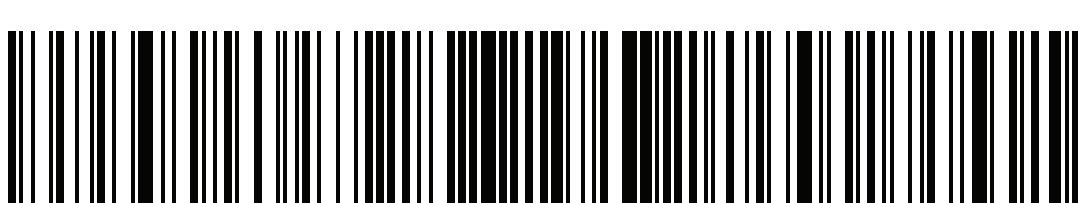
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In 2014, food journalist Mark Bittman wrote an article in The New York Times, *The True Cost of a Burger*, which aimed to combine the externalized costs of hamburgers into a price that accurately reflected its actual societal cost.

This infographic is a follow-up on that original article that similarly wants to highlight external costs that most consumers could easily overlook. For simplicity, a “quarter pounder” is defined as a 1/4 lb of beef, bread, 1 slice of cheese, 1 large leaf of lettuce, 2 thick slices of tomato, and 4 .32 ounce packets of ketchup. Figures are rounded to the nearest cent.

Description	Quantity	Rate	Amount
 Environment			
CO₂ Emissions: Social cost of CO ₂ is estimated to be about \$220 per metric ton. Each 1/4 lb of beef produces:	6.25 Lbs of CO ₂	\$220 / metric ton	\$00.62
Water Use: 1 "Quarter Pounder" requires:	510 Gallons of Water	\$94.05 / 1000 m ³	\$00.18
Energy: Power required to make 1/4 Lb of beef totals 7.875 kWh, or about:	1/4 Gallon of Gas	\$2.479 / gallon	\$00.62
Land: The average cost of pasture (per acre) in 2017 is \$2256. 1/4 Lb of beef requires:	64.5 sq ft of land	\$00.05 / sq ft	\$03.34
 Health			
Health care expenditures in 2012 exceeded \$2.795 Trillion. According to the Harvard School of Public Health, nearly 21% of the United States' total health care spending went towards obesity-related costs. It's proposed that a further 15% of these costs are a result of eating hamburgers.	\$86.37 Billion	16 Billion Burgers Consumed	\$05.40
 Labor			
In 2013, nearly 52% of front-line fast food employees were enrolled in one or more public programs. The cost of these public assistance programs exceeds:	\$6.85 Billion	16 Billion Burgers Consumed	\$00.43
According to the Department of Labor, 46% of all agricultural workers are undocumented immigrants. For every dollar spent on produce, these workers are paid:	\$0.08		\$00.08
	Subtotal		\$10.67
	Tax		\$0.75
	Total		\$11.42



Designed by Sam Aquilar