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### **South Korea: Constructing And Enforcing New Laws In The Dog Meat Industry**

Animals have always and will always be extremely important for survival. Some are seen as companions and others provide nutrients to both plants and other animals alike, including humans. Animals are a huge food source for humans all around the world which allows for the possibility for the livestock industry to thrive. The world consists of many cultures all of which live in various places on the earth with different climates and environments. With that being said, what we eat will not be the same everywhere we go. Some animals are sacred to certain cultures and are not allowed to be slaughtered; while others are considered 'livestock animals' and are used mostly for food consumption. Not every animal is in the same category around the world, it varies throughout. This can become a very controversial topic when certain animals; such as dogs are considered a companion animal in one part of the world, but also a food source in another. In the United States, there have been problems with respect to the treatment of animals in the livestock and food industry in the past. This is true for other countries as well. In response to others asking for better treatment of the animals, laws were created and imposed to regulate people within the industry and to keep the animals safe and healthy. However, this is still a problem in other parts of the world; such as, South Korea and specifically their dog meat industry. Due to roughly seventeen thousand dog farms in South Korea going unregulated, the Korean government needs to create and enforce more laws regarding the well-being of the animals in the industry.

As of January 2019, South Korea's population reached 51,259,098 consisting of 19.3% rural and 81.7% urban (Population, 2019). The country's government is a democratic republic, their president being Moon Jae-in (Sawe, 2016). Less than 25% of the land is cultivated (Hahn & Lew, 2019) and their average farm size is 1.2 acres (Ahn & Miles, 2013). Their major crops are rice and barley with their major exports being machinery, electronics, transportation, textiles, equipment, clothing and footwear (Hahn & Lew, 2019). South Korea is a mountainous peninsula which can be divided into four regions. There are four apparent seasons with a short rainy season called Jangma in the summer months. Average temperature in the winter ranges from 19 degrees Fahrenheit to 33 degrees Fahrenheit and the summer ranging from 71 degrees Fahrenheit to 83 degrees Fahrenheit ("Government", n.d.). As of 2007, the typical family size is 2.88 members per household with most of the population living in multi housing units or apartments ("Koreatimes", 2007). Their diet consists of mainly rice with vegetables as side dishes or in soups; they also add legumes; such as, soybeans to their dishes. A very popular way to prepare the vegetables is to either pickle them or have them fermented. Beef; as well as, fish is largely consumed ("Korea", n.d.). Korea has supermarkets and also many outdoor markets where vendors are able to sell their goods and produce. They use typical kitchen equipment; such as, stoves and rice cookers to cook their meals. However, many Koreans to this day still make their own kimchi and they have to store it and other pickled vegetables to allow them to ferment ("cuisine", n.d.). The average income in Seoul is 37,810,000 Korean won, with minimum wage being 7,530 Korean won per hour ("annual wage", n.d.). Services makes up 59.2% of the major industries, with industry coming in second at 38.6% and lastly with agriculture at 2.2% ("overview", n.d.). Education is super important in South Korea, they put a lot of focus on it and make sure that it is accessible. The country has a literacy rate of 97.9% ("Education", n.d.). South Korea has a National Health Insurance Program and all people in South Korea are eligible for coverage. As of 2006, 96.3% of the population was covered under this program, while the remaining 3.7% was covered

under the Medical Aid Program which is designed to support low-income families. Problems with the healthcare system is regional disparities in medical services; as well as, the growing elderly population (Young, 2009). The country has universal water and wastewater services that allows everyone to have clean water and toilets. However, there is still a lot of old plumbing systems throughout the country which can cause problems; as well as, squatter toilets still existing. They have a really good transportation system, which is not a surprise, considering it is still being relatively new post Korean War. They have multiple cabs and buses; as well as, an amazing subway system that makes it easy to travel at a cheap price. They also have train that allow you to travel across the country. There are many accessible markets throughout the country that sells food and other items such as clothing at an affordable price. South Korea is very technologically advanced and has some of the fastest wi-fi. The country unfortunately has one of the highest suicide rates. Many claim this due to the immense amount of stress and pressure that the students have in school. Jobs are super competitive in the country which puts pressure on the students to be the best leading them to basically never stop studying. The country has a huge drinking culture and the high levels of alcohol consumption may possibly have a connection with the suicide rate as well. Mental health is not something that the country focuses on or strives to improve ("mental health", n.d.). Many people are almost 'shunned' by others if they decide to get help for their mental state; such as, a therapist. This leads many people to go untreated and to deal with their problems alone which in a lot of cases they can't handle the pressure to do good in school and get a job, so instead they decide that the only option is to end their lives ("Competition", 2015). Small businesses also tend to struggle due to large corporations; such as, Samsung that make it almost impossible for them to succeed, this can lead to less jobs for the youth (Frayer, 2017).

As of 2002, there was an estimated amount of 765,006 dog farms throughout South Korea with roughly 2.5 million dogs being slaughtered each year. It is said that on average the dog meat industry creates a revenue of about two billion dollars, with over 20,000 restaurants still serving dog meat to this day (Czajkowski, 2014). South Korea first created their Animal Protection Law in 1991. It has since been revised three more times; each time with clearer restrictions; as well as, harsher punishment for those who violate the laws. These laws pertain not only to house pets but livestock as well. With regards to the dog meat industry it is neither legal or illegal. Between 1975 and 1978, dogs were considered strictly livestock animals. Since then the Livestock Products Sanitary Control Act does not consider dogs to be livestock animal or used for food consumption; however, the Livestock Industry Act created by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MFAFF); still considers them as such. As you can see there are many gray areas and loopholes. The Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW) put in place laws that make the sale and manufacture of dog meat in South Korea illegal; however, these laws go unenforced; as well as, the laws regarding how treatment of the animals before they are slaughtered and how they are slaughtered ("Protection Laws", n.d.). High amounts of dog meat are consumed during *Boknal* which is the beginning and ending days of the summer season. It is believed that dog meat heals people and helps with the summer heat. It is said that dog meat has certain qualities to it that health and spiritual benefits. Dog meat is consumed more in rural areas as opposed to urban; as well as, consumed more by men than women due to its supposed benefits regarding a man's virility ("Before", 2018). A 2004 survey regarding the dog meat industry, resulted in 55% disapproving the industry. Another survey done by the Ministry of Agriculture states that 59% of respondents under the age of thirty would not eat dog meat and 62% stated that they saw dogs as pets not food. As shown from these surveys and more, as new generations arise, less and less people are eating dog meat. The younger generations view dogs as pets while the older generation is more open to the idea of eating dogs. This seems like a good thing; however, South Korea has a very large elderly population. Even if it seems as though less people are eating dogs, the conditions for these animals remains the same and law enforcement remains absent within the dog meat industry. These animals spend their days in crowded, rusty, wire cages. They are

extremely emaciated with many sores from the conditions that they live in (Phil, 2016). Humans are also affected by how these dogs are treated. These dogs do not get any proper medical attention which means they do not receive the rabies vaccine. The rabies virus is very deadly to both animals and humans and it is easily spread through the dog meat industry. These animals are also very susceptible to other diseases as well and can easily spread them to the other dogs and humans that come in contact with them. Due to the poor environment that they live in, farmers will inject these dogs with antibiotics and as many vaccines as they can in order to keep the dogs alive long enough to slaughter them and sell them (Farr, 2015). Not only do these animals live in a high stress environment, but they also die in one as well. Many of the dogs are butchered in open streets in front of onlookers and other dogs, which is illegal, and in extreme cases they are beaten and/or hung before they die.

There are two very good solutions to this problem, one being to get rid of dog farms in South Korea all together. This may seem difficult because these dog farms provide an income for families in rural areas, so how can we get rid of these farms without causing problems with the farmers income? Well Humane Society International found a way. They successfully closed their first dog farm back in 2015, and have closed twelve more since then; as well as, multiple farm dog rescues. How did they manage to do this? First they offer a financial incentive ranging between \$2,000-\$60,000 depending on the amount of dogs at the location. This allows the farmers to transition to other sources of income; such as, blueberry farming and etc. They then take the dogs and ship them to the USA and elsewhere and send them to multiple dog shelters to be later adopted by a loving family. This is a very good solution because a lot of dog farmers don't enjoy what they do and wish they could stop, but they can't get out of it because the money that they make goes to keeping their families alive and they can't spare any extra money to change to something else ("Closing", n.d.). Of course the question is, how does the Humane Society International get the money to pay these farmers? What if they run out? Well they get the money from donations. These donations come from normal people all over the world. As long as people are donating, these dog farms can be shut down. Social media is a great way to spread awareness to this topic and to encourage more and more people to donate whatever they can to help these dogs. This plan of action solves a big part of the problem while also keeping the conflict at minimum because these people are giving up their farms willingly. It is extremely important to educate the public about problems within the world such as this one because the dog meat industry does not only pertain to South Korea, but other countries as well. If we can spread knowledge on this topic, then we can receive more help and support in solving this issue. Other organizations can get involved with this too such as the International Aid for Korean Animals. As more and more dog farms shut down; the dog meat industry will become weaker and weaker and eventually won't exist.

The second solution is getting the South Korean government to put their attention on this predicament and do something about it. They need to strengthen and clarify already existing laws; as well as, create new laws that either ban the industry all together or make it so that these dogs are treated humanely and have the proper living conditions, medical attention, and are killed in the most humane way possible. They need to stop the cruelty happening against these dogs. What is more important than the government creating new laws is the actual enforcement of these laws. They laws that are in place today seem as though they don't exist because nobody abides by them. The reason for this is because the authorities don't take action against these people, they don't even pay attention to them. Laws mean nothing if they aren't enforced and those that break them are prosecuted for their crimes. Not only would this help solve the problems with dog meat industry, but also improve South Korea's livestock industry altogether because the government will put more attention on how these animals are being treated and deal with those that are mistreating them. How do we get the government to do this? Get the public involved. If there is widespread angst within their communities, they can't ignore that. Especially if people from all

around the world were involved as well. Part of the first solution also applies to this one, and that is social media. As stated before it is a great way to spread awareness and gain support from those all across the globe. Multiple organizations and websites have petitions that anyone can sign to stop the mistreatment of dogs in the dog meat industry. Also this could hopefully encourage other countries with the same problem; such as, China and the Philippines to take action and end this issue for good.

South Korea is advancing their country at incredible rates; however, they are slow to deal with the issues surrounding the animal welfare within the dog meat industry that is still apparent in their country. It is time to stop the cruelty from happening and encourage these farmers to take responsibility and do what's right. The government needs to stop ignoring the problem at hand and fix it. The inhumane treatment of these animals can no longer continue. Dog farms should be monitored and/or abolished if those in the industry refuse to provide the correct care for the dogs they are raising. The government needs to take action with new laws and enforcement to create a better life for these animals and encourage others around the world with the same problem to do so as well.

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