

EDU Sample Focused Responses

#1: Tom Philpott's essay, "Factory Farming Is Not the Only Way to Feed the World" offers more convincing grounds to support the argument's claim than does David Leyonhjelm's essay, "Factory Farming Is Essential to Feed the World." Philpott cites scientific evidence that questions both the necessity and the safety of what he calls "Big Ag." This evidence includes researchers' considered opinions, including the expert testimony of "soil scientist John P. Reaganold." Augmenting this evidence is a report by the National Research Council as well as a comprehensive study that grew from the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge. Philpott, an experienced food reporter, acknowledges that organic farming alone might not have the potential to feed the world's hungry. This concession enhances his credibility as a more reasonable and less biased voice in the debate compared to Leyonahjelm who is affiliated with the factory farming industry. Leyonahjelm offers several claims about animals' humane treatment in his defense of factory farming, but offers only his say so to support his claims. Strength of the evidence and the author's credibility therefore make Philpott's argument stronger than Leyonhjelm's.

#2: Leyonhjelm's argument that factory farming is critical to addressing world hunger fails to consider important environmental concerns represented graphically in the Table that accompanies his and Philpott's arguments. Data supplied by the Food and Water Watch Analysis of the USDA suggests that as the number of cattle on factory farms increases, the waste these massive herds produce has the potential to contaminate water and to strain the capabilities of water purification plants. For instance, in California alone, the waste excreted by factory farm cows is equivalent to that excreted by 103 million people. Leyonhjelm's argument should address that concern. Philpott's argument alludes to public health, but he could have used the graphic information to bolster his argument. Both authors' arguments would have benefited from integrating the graphic information.