If We Are What We Eat, Let’s Be Kind

To the Editor:

Re “A Farm Boy Reflects” (column, July 31):

Hats off to Nicholas D. Kristof, who takes note of the trend represented by the animal welfare proposition on the ballot in California this fall.

While this legislation would be an important step in transforming inhumane animal production, we must also call for change on the federal level, where the farm bill subsidizes this sector to the tune of billions of dollars.

In the past decade, for instance, we have doled out more than $3 billion in direct subsidies to large-scale livestock producers. And thanks to federal corn and soybean subsidies, factory farms saved an estimated $3.9 billion a year between 1997 and 2005, totaling nearly $35 billion, according to researchers at the Global Development and Environment Institute at Tufts University.

It’s time that our tax dollars no longer finance the inhumane conditions — for workers and animals and the climate — of factory farms.

Anna Lappé

Brooklyn, July 31, 2008

The writer is a co-founder of the Small Planet Institute.