The role of livestock in developing countries: Misperceptions, facts and consequences

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Extinction and Livestock: Moving to a Flourishing Food System for Wildlife, Farm Animals and Us
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By 2050:
- at least 10 billion to feed

- demand for milk, meat and eggs at least double in developing countries
  • because of population, urbanization and income
    – not over-consumption
Animal-source foods are valuable

5 of 6 highest value global commodities
(total value of these five is US$715 billion)
Livestock sector and economies

Global and national economy – 40% of agricultural GDP and growing;
Household economy – over ¾ billion dependent livelihoods; more than 1.5 billion involved
Over 50% of the World’s crop and livestock products are produced by smallholder farmers on integrated crop-livestock farms.
Is livestock production responsible for the destruction of habitats, damaging biodiversity through:
- overgrazing
- cultivation of pastures and feed crops?

Moderate grazing is good for biodiversity of wildlife and plants.

57% of land used for feed production is not suitable for crop production.

86% of the dry matter eaten by animals cannot be consumed by humans.

Diets with some animal source foods use less land than vegan alternatives.
Is livestock production a major cause of climate change through:

- GHG emissions from animals
- Land clearing for pastures and feed crops?

Emissions from livestock are about 14% of all human-induced emissions (less than transport, energy and industry) [these calculations from IPCC are based on developed country data; figures for developing countries may be considerably lower]

Within agriculture, which makes up 24% of global emissions, livestock presents the biggest opportunity to reduce emissions – by at least 30%

Livestock are essential for resilient food systems [manure, traction, risk management]

Trees are initially cut down mainly for timber or charcoal – not to make pastures
Is consumption of animal-source foods bad for your health causing:
- obesity
- cancer

30% of the World’s protein comes from animal-source foods

Animal-source foods contain B12, micronutrients and more bioavailable macronutrients than plant-based foods

Animal-source foods are essential in the first 1000 days of life
- Milk improves growth, preventing stunting
- Meat improves cognitive ability
Sustainable Development Goals: for the whole World

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-Being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals
Sustainable Development Goals: livestock contribute directly to eight goals.

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Sustainable Development Goals: at least four cannot be achieved without livestock
Consequences: doing away with livestock – SDG 1

Three-quarters of a billion people will have no chance to escape poverty

Eliminating poverty for the 700 million still below the poverty line will not happen
Consequences: doing away with livestock – SDG 2

Half the World’s cereal crop could be decimated
The biggest opportunity to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture will be lost.
Consequences: doing away with livestock – SDG 2, 3

Eliminating stunting for over 150 million children and malnutrition for 800 million people will not be realized

Micronutrient deficiencies for 2 million will not go away
Perhaps the two biggest misperceptions?

**Misperception:** Livestock are the problem, not the solution

*Many of the SDGs cannot be achieved without the livestock sector – its part of the solution*

**Misperception:** Developed and developing worlds have different aims in the livestock sector

*All strive for safe, sustainable livestock production that makes a positive contribution to SDGs worldwide. The starting points, and thus transition pathways differ.*
better lives through livestock

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