

Livestock solutions for a better environment

Sara Place | Associate Professor November 5, 2024



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Sustainability is Complex, Multi-Faceted and Often Emotionally Driven



Population trends, 1950 - 2021





Source: UN FAO STAT: https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data

Cropland per capita has declined 54% since 1961





Global population, 2021



SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS



Source: UN FAO STAT: https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data

Many nations in Latin America & the Caribbean are net exporters – creating economic development domestically & nutritional security globally – beef example Bovine meat, exports - imports tons



SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE



Source: UN FAO STAT: https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data

Cattle per person, 2021



SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS



Source: UN FAO STAT: https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data

Total production gains have had environmental consequences

- Increased total inputs use
 - N, P, K
- Challenges with expansion and land use change from native ecosystems
- Increases in livestock numbers to meet growing demand for meat, milk, and eggs
- All have implications to increase absolute GHG emissions



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



JNext

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE

Intensity improvements vs. absolute impacts

Emissions intensities are not static – animal agriculture has been making significant improvements in efficiency: Beef example



SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE



UN FAOSTAT database

Reductions in emissions intensity do not always translate into decreases in absolute emissions

Rates of improvement need to match or exceed production growth to freeze or reduce emissions



AgNext COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

> SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE

UN FAOSTAT database

Case example: Uruguay beef production







Latin America and Caribbean meat and poultry production & direct CO₂e emissions





Opportunities to lower GHG emissions intensity



SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE



Kg of production

Improvements can have win-wins (improved productivity => \$\$, nutritional security) & tradeoffs (increased grain use => feedfood competition)

Emissions reductions examples:

-Reducing emissions from feed production/pastures -Improving C removals

-Reducing enteric methane emissions directly -Reducing emissions from manure

Productivity improvements examples:

-Improve reproductive performance

-Improve rates of gain to decrease days to slaughter (beef)

-Improve milk production, lower age-at-first calving, optimize productive life (dairy)

- -Improve animal health
- -Improved genetic merit
- -Improved animal nutrition

Tradeoffs in extensive & intensive production





Cow-calf/stocker production

- ~80% of GHG emissions
- Minimal feed-food competition
- Multiple ecosystem services potential

Rotz et al., 2019. Environmental footprints of beef cattle production in the United States. Ag. Syst. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308521X18305675



SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE

Feedlot production

- ~20% of GHG emissions
- More feed-food competition
- Potential for nutrient
 management challenges



Complexity of land use & multiple ecosystem services from livestock systems



SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY

Sharing, sparing, suitability, "best use"

Bottom line



- With growing population & incomes, animal source food demand will continue to grow
- Livestock in Latin America & Caribbean have multiple potential benefits: economic development, nutritional security, ecosystem services
- GHG emissions from global livestock have increased in absolute terms; however, reductions in emissions intensity have allowed for significant avoided emissions
- Investment in livestock productivity & technology innovations have substantial upsides for improved:
 - ✓ Environment
 - ✓ Economic & nutritional security



Subscribe to Our Newsletter!



sara.place@colostate.edu



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE

Listen to the AgNext Podcast!

