



Photo: Farm Sanctuary

Responding to the “Livestock Revolution” – the case for livestock public policies

Rapid growth in livestock production has great potential to propel sustainable progress on many fronts. It also has great potential to threaten both sustainability and progress.

It can contribute to poverty reduction
... or erode the opportunities and livelihoods of poor producers.

It can enhance nutrient recycling and soil fertility
... or degrade soil, pollute water and accelerate global warming.

It can improve nutrition and health
... or increase the risk of epidemics for both animals and humans.

Effective public policies are essential to ensure that livestock contribute to broad development goals and to minimize damage to social equity, the environment and public health.

Directly or indirectly, livestock production has a major impact on every person on the planet, as well as on the environment and climate of the planet itself. People depend on meat, eggs and dairy products for food, on wool and leather for clothing, on animal draught power to till their fields and on manure to fertilize them. Livestock production accounts for more than half of the total value of agricultural output and provides employment and income for hundreds of millions of people.

Over thousands of years, herding animals have shaped both human cultures and the physical environment across vast rangeland areas. Similarly, farmers who raise both animals and crops have moulded the contours of agrarian ecosystems and communities. When livestock production contributes \$1 trillion or more to the global economy and emits more than half of some greenhouse gases, even the most dedicated urban vegetarian feels the economic and environmental repercussions.

Historically, the economic, social and environmental impact of livestock production has been huge. Recently it has changed and grown at breathtaking speed. Policies to monitor, regulate and mitigate the impact have not kept pace. Many existing policies are outdated, ineffective at best and often counter-productive. New policy initiatives and directions are urgently needed to address the rapidly growing and changing impact of livestock production. ▶

