

Delivering Sustainable Food Systems

Statement by the global livestock sector, July 2021

The global livestock sector comprises over 1.3 billion farmers, ranchers, producers, processors, and companies around the world who collectively provide most of the world's animal products – milk, meat, eggs, aquaculture and other products. These range from smallholders to larger operations - the scale and diversity of animal agriculture means it plays a vital role in sustainable food production. With the growing efforts within the global community to strengthen food systems, it is important to evaluate the contributions of livestock and identify how these efforts can deliver positive, productive proposals that will re-ignite efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Nutritional and Social Contributions

Animal-sourced foods [provide](#) 18% of global calories and 39% of protein intake. Due to its nutrient density, it is an important nutrition source for the [2 billion](#) suffering from 'hidden hunger' and the [141 million](#) children who experience stunting.



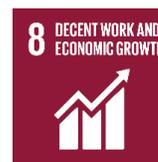
Livestock produce these calories primarily by eating foods that are inedible to people such as grasses, crop residues and by-products, which is why the FAO has [said](#) animals like cattle 'contribute directly to global food security.' With [2/3rds](#) of the world's agricultural lands being permanent meadows and pastures, livestock also offer a way to produce food in areas that would otherwise be unproductive. This will help strengthen food security as urban centers [grow](#) and our population [rises](#) to almost 10 billion by 2050.

Economic Contributions

[1 in 6](#) people worldwide depend on animal agriculture for their livelihood, creating a sector that contributes [US\\$1.27 trillion](#) to global economies and [40%](#) of agricultural GDP. FAO [calls](#) livestock 'the world's third most important source of income' and 'an asset for economic resilience and income'.



Livestock offer a form of financial security and during drought, flood, or conflict it is relocatable. With women representing 66% of the world's poor livestock keepers, this directly supports the [UN's goal](#) of strengthening their resilience.



Environmental

Animal products cannot come at the expense of the environment. Livestock can, and in many areas does, produce nutritious food with practices and technologies that sustainably manages the planet's natural resources. The UNFAO estimates global 'lifecycle emissions' for livestock are [14.5%](#), while the IPCC estimates direct GHG emissions are [5%](#). Farmers are working to reduce it further through new technologies such as innovation in animal nutrition, digital monitoring, new vaccines and more.



Industrialized nations have reduced land use for livestock by [20%](#) in recent decades while doubling production, thanks to innovation in animal nutrition, animal health, genetics, etc. The FAO estimates livestock emissions can fall a further [30%](#) through increased adoption of best practices and technologies. Livestock are central to regenerative agriculture with grazing supporting sustainable food systems, while integration with cropping systems provides environmental and nutritional gains.

Creating Collaboration and Sustainable Success

There are a growing number of global efforts to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals including one-time events such as the UN Food Systems Summit and existing platforms like the Conference of the Parties (COP) and FAO Committee on Agriculture's recently constituted Sub-Committee on Livestock. These programs are vital to bringing about positive, productive change. Business-as-usual is *not* an option and improvements are needed across all of agriculture. Crop and livestock, organic and conventional, large-scale and smallholder, local and global, etc.

With only a decade until 2030 though and progress towards the SDGs [stalling](#), we cannot afford missteps. Therefore, it is important for these global bodies and events to center their efforts around a core group of components that can bring all stakeholders to the table and deliver change that provides for social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Focus on Sustainable Improvements in Hunger and Malnutrition

The FAO's 2021 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World was distressing to the global agriculture community. Hunger and malnutrition [skyrocketed, while 30%](#) of the global population lacked year-round access to adequate food. Feeding the world with proper nutrition in the face of climate change is the challenge of our generation. Any effort to improve food systems must have this goal at its core. Outputs should clearly outline how it will sustainability reduce these numbers in the coming years in clear, workable, and measurable ways built off existing knowledge and science. Without hunger, malnutrition and affordability at the core of our work, we risk developing systems that meet the needs of those whose needs have already been met.

Recognition of the Value of Innovation

Agriculture is an innovative sector. Farmers have embraced new techniques to improve their operations for millennia, from centuries-old efforts to breed heartier animals to the digital revolution of today. When global sustainability efforts recognize and work with this innovative mindset, it can be a massive driver for better outcomes and impacts. Already, the FAO estimates livestock emissions could be cut by [30%](#) through increased adoption of best practices and technologies. The growing 'digital revolution' in livestock could further accelerate these gains as new methods to predict, prevent, monitor, diagnose and rapidly treat disease deliver better health outcomes alongside improved welfare. FAO and OECD [state](#) that most of agriculture's production increases in the next 10 years will come from productivity improvements; this starts with innovation.

Inclusive and Collaborative Approach

Agriculture is a diverse sector. Within livestock, 40+ animal species and 7000 breeds are farmed worldwide across countless systems – conventional, organic, high-tech, smallholder, etc. This means there are no 'one-size fits all' solutions, which is why global sustainability summits and mechanisms must create inclusive, collaborative frameworks for their activities. This means developing solutions in open, transparent ways that ensures all stakeholders can contribute and have their voice heard. Final outputs should reflect the diversity of production worldwide and the opportunity to strengthen the sustainability of all food systems, not just a subset that appeal to select constituencies.

Embracing Change that Builds off Existing Knowledge

Agriculture is a knowledgeable sector. Farms intimately understand their animals and lands, relying on wisdom often deeply embedded in cultural values. The accumulation of knowledge in farming across centuries is a powerful tool that if properly harnessed could rapidly strengthen improvements in sustainability. Efforts that disregard this and seek to completely 'transform' agriculture from the ground-up risk imposing changes that the value chain knows cannot deliver success. Significant change is needed to strengthen sustainable food systems, therefore global summits and mechanisms must work with those who will deliver that change and understand how to make it successful.

Science-Based Conclusions

With only a decade remaining to meet the SDGs, we cannot risk approaches that may not deliver necessary progress. Global efforts must rely upon the knowledge within the scientific community to understand what approaches have proven benefits at a global or regional scale, such as the role of animal-sourced foods in healthy, sustainable diets. Extrapolating very small case studies or hyper local approaches to a worldwide scale means the diversity of agriculture – what works in one place may not elsewhere – is lost. Proposals that emerge from sustainability summits and mechanisms must demonstrate how they are built off reliable science that indicates how this will deliver productive, positive and sustainable change.

Our Contributions to Change

Delivering on sustainability and the outputs of any collaboration will require action from across agriculture. The livestock value chain recognizes this and has undertaken numerous commitments and other actions.



DAIRY. Dairy products provide much needed nutritional value to billions of consumers. Dairy contributes to all the UN SDGs, particularly to SDGs Zero Hunger, Alleviation of Poverty, Health & Wellness and Gender Equity. The [Dairy Declaration of Rotterdam](#) is a unique and strong commitment to sustainable development by the global dairy sector. To better assess the impact of dairy systems around the world,

IDF and GDP together with the UN FAO and the Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock (GASL), have recently published several research papers demonstrating dairy's role in achieving the SDGs and delivered new initiatives [including Pathways to Dairy Net Zero](#); [Dairy Nourishes Africa](#); and [Dairy Sustainability Framework](#).

The sector is represented by two organisations: The **International Dairy Federation (IDF)**, the leading source of scientific and technical expertise for stakeholders of the dairy chain, composed of 43 member countries representing 75% of world milk production.

The **Global Dairy Platform (GDP)** is a not-for-profit industry association representing more than 95 leading cooperatives, companies, associations, scientific bodies, and other partners, with operations in more than 150



EGGS. There are over 2 million egg farmers globally, with over 800,000 in China alone. The egg sector directly supports millions of families around the world, advancing equitable livelihoods in rural communities. In low- and middle-income countries, women represent a large proportion of egg farmers and they rely upon their farms to provide food for their families, and income to send their children to school. Eggs are a nutrition powerhouse, containing most of the vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants required, and are recognized for their role in healthy balanced diets.



POULTRY. Poultry provides highly digestible proteins of excellent nutritional quality, with necessary vitamins and minerals for billions of people in all countries. The sector signed the [Declaration of Sao Paulo](#) with the FAO in 2019 with a view to focus on key sustainable development goals by the total poultry meat sector. This document outlines the 5 SDGs (Zero Hunger, Good Health, Quality Education, Industry, innovation and infrastructure, Climate action) on which the poultry industry can have a real impact. The sector is proactive in advancing food safety, addressing antimicrobial resistance, and the sharing of best practices globally.



MEAT. Dietary guidelines recommend consumption of meat in appropriate amounts as part of a healthy, balanced diet and lifestyle. The industry champions science-based solutions and policies continued innovation and better technologies, free and fair trade, and sustainable business as key elements to meet the challenge of growing demand. The sector is working with its partners to set ambitious goals around reducing emissions, improving land use and animal welfare. In 2021, the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef set a goal to [reduce net global warming impact of beef 30% by 2030](#). To help achieve these goals, best practices are championed to facilitate knowledge exchange and foster a collaborative, science-based approach. The aim is a more environmentally responsible, more economically resilient, and more socially beneficial industry.



FEED. Animal nutrition, through innovation and efficiency, is and has been an essential part of the solution to make the livestock production chain more sustainable. The role of animal nutrition is to ensure animal resilience and productivity, producing more with less, optimizing environmental resources, applicable to farmers in developed countries, as well for smallholder farmers in developing countries. One of IFIF's key missions is to support and encourage the sustainable development of animal production and foster animal nutrition innovation and efficiency. IFIF supports and encourages the development and use of science-based global guidance to measure, benchmark and improve environmental performance and sustainability of animal production.



ANIMAL HEALTH. This sector offers the products and technologies that make and keep animals healthy. These technologies are used on farms of all sizes and types -- smallholder and large-scale; conventional and organic; developed and developing; etc. -- to safeguard animals against disease and improve welfare. With 20% of livestock lost to disease each year, improving their care accelerates SDG efforts. Furthermore, HealthforAnimals Members are [undertaking a wide range of activities](#) to reduce the impact of their operations such as carbon neutral facilities or emission reduction commitments and building partnerships to strengthen global nutrition sustainability.

countries and collectively produces approximately 33% of all the world's milk.

The sector is represented by the **International Egg Commission (IEC)**, a not-for-profit organization, representing egg farmers, national egg associations, egg graders and producers of egg products.

The sector is represented by the **International Poultry Council (IPC)**, a global Association representing the poultry meat value chain worldwide. With its 31 Country Members and 54 Associate Members, IPC's members represent more than 88% of the world poultry meat production and 95% of the global poultry meat trade. Members represent small family farms to fully integrated operations and include all parts of the poultry value chain from input suppliers to food service.

The sector is represented by the **International Meat Secretariat (IMS)** a non-profit that brings together producers, national/regional associations, exporters, processors, governments, and corporate partners. Members are in countries that represent about 75% of the global production of cattle, pig, and sheep meat.

The **Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB)** is a global network powering progress in sustainable beef. Across its global roundtable and 12 regional roundtables, GRSB have over 500 members, in 24 countries. Collectively, members are responsible for more than two thirds of cross-border beef trade.

The **International Feed Industry Federation (IFIF)** represents the global animal feed industry as an essential participant in the food chain that provides sustainable, safe, nutritious, and affordable food for a growing world population. IFIF members represent over 80% of total animal feed production worldwide, including national and regional feed associations from Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North America. One of IFIF's key missions is to support the sustainable development of animal production and IFIF strives to support the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The sector is represented by **HealthforAnimals** (global animal health association), bringing together developers of veterinary health products such as vaccines, parasiticides, antibiotics, nutrition supplements, diagnostics, digital technologies, and other products.

Building on the specific initiatives taken by farmers and others, most of the livestock sectors are active in leading global sustainability initiatives like [Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock \(GASL\)](#) and [Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance \(LEAP\)](#).

The livestock sector can help accelerate efforts to achieve the SDGs and deliver a healthier future for all. The sector is eager to work with international institutions and others to help achieve nutritious diets and resilient production built upon a foundation of science and innovation. The livestock sector invites others to work together to achieve this goal.