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Get Rid of Livestock! Save The Planet!

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The U.S. Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) recently filed a petition with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate air emissions being emitted from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). The petition claimed that the methane and nitrous oxide emissions from CAFOs are dangerous. Moreover, the petition claims that methane is the 2nd most important greenhouse gas (GHG) and that nitrous oxide is the 3rd most important GHG causing climate change.

The petition claims that worldwide animal agriculture is responsible for 18% of all GHG emissions contributing to global warming!! The assertions in the petition are now being supported by a new report "Livestock and Climate Change: What if the key actors in climate change are…cows, pigs, and chickens?" from Worldwatch Institute (www.worldwatch.org/ww/livestock), a Washington, D.C. based think tank which claims 150 partners in 40 countries and translates its research into 20 languages.

A key player of Worldwatch Institute has been Lester Brown who has repeatedly claimed agriculture production cannot keep up with the world's food needs.

Livestock to blame
Worldwatch authors claim that livestock is the key actor in climate change. I am not making this up. The Worldwatch report claims "…the life cycle and supply chain of domesticated animals raised for food have been vastly underestimated as a source of GHGs and in fact account for at least half of all human-caused GHGs."

The authors, both associated with the World Bank, develop facts to demonstrate that replacing livestock may be one of the best strategies to reduce GHGs and climate change effects.

Worldwatch refers to a United Nations' Food and Agriculture Report from 2006 entitled "Livestock's Long Shadow". The UN report did not include livestock respiration. Worldwatch authors claim that is a mistake, that livestock respiration is equivalent to automobile exhaust, because livestock like automobiles "…are a human invention and convenience not part of pre-human times and a molecule of CO2 exhaled by livestock is no more natural than one from an auto tailpipe."

The Worldwatch report is well-timed and provides data to support the HSUS petition now pending before EPA to control animal-created air emissions. My guess is EPA will review this study in determining whether to regulate air emissions from CAFO operations.

Even though methane is a much more potent GHG than CO2, its half-life in our atmosphere is approximately 8 years vs. 100 years for CO2. Quite simply, if you can significantly reduce the number of livestock worldwide, you can reduce GHGs very quickly. In other words, get rid of CAFOs now and save the planet.

Clearly this is an effort that could be very successful in reducing animal protein.

Going vegetarian
One might naturally think this makes no sense because it would create a food shortage. As nations become wealthier, the citizens tend to eat more meat protein. The Worldwatch report has an answer.

The report claims there are market alternatives for the animal protein we eat today. There are alternatives that "…taste similar but are easier to cook, less expensive, and healthier and so are better than livestock products."

It is further claimed that analog products such as soy and rice milk, cheese and ice cream are indistinguishable from meat and dairy products when they are processed and prepared. Worldwatch suggests fast food outlets could sell soy burgers, soy chicken products, and sandwiches made with these so called meat analog products. It is also suggested those who do not like meat and dairy analogs should be happy with protein-rich legumes and grains (good news for grain farmers).

Moreover, the authors believe artificial meat cultivated in laboratories from cells may be a substitute in what is known as "in vitro meat".

Worldwatch concludes that if we reduce the number of livestock and switch to meat and dairy analog products we will not only reduce and solve the global warming issue but will ease the global food crisis and bring a halt to the global water crisis because livestock consume such large amounts of water.

This is the kind of research going on in Washington and being used to argue against CAFOs and animal agriculture. The report is not all that long and you may want to take a look at it because this is what the best and brightest in Washington, D.C. believe should be the future of animal agriculture.

You might also like to know that Dr. Robert Goodland, a coauthor of this report, said back in 2000, "Dairy projects are usually inequitable, nutritionally questionable and risky for health."

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