



Putting livestock-keepers at the centre



of the climate-livestock debate

Starting from herders' own knowledge and understanding of extensive livestock production systems suggests a very different approach to thinking about the climate and livestock debate. Drawing conclusions from a limited range of studies focused on industrial production is misleading, and can lead to damaging policy recommendations that undermine livelihoods and environments.

Extensive livestock-keepers produce meat, milk and other products in rangelands across more than half of the world's land area, making use of challenging, variable environments. Extensive livestock production, including mobile pastoralism, can have substantial benefits for both people and the planet through the supporting livelihoods in marginal areas and contributing products to markets, at the same time as protecting landscapes, promoting biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem services.



To date the debate on livestock and the climate has become highly polarised. However, by putting pastoralists at the centre of the debate, five ways forward are suggested:

-  **1. Focus on the production process** (industrial vs. extensive pastoral production) not the product (meat and milk).
-  **2. Improve data and challenge assumptions** in global assessments. Adopt an integrated systems approach.
-  **3. Explore alternatives** to seemingly quick-fix solutions (cultured meat, 'rewilding', tree planting) and simplistic diet change recommendations.
-  **4. Develop practical solutions to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions** (manure management, grazing mobility, carbon sequestration strategies) by working with livestock-keepers, drawing on local knowledge and practices.
-  **5. Bring livestock-keepers living in extensive rangelands into global conversations** on climate change and the future of food systems.



“**With proper support, livestock-keepers can help address the climate change”**

There is an urgent need for these insights to inform the debate on food and the climate, lest inappropriate policies for climate mitigation and dietary change are imposed. Blanket approaches promoted by misleading assessment techniques and inappropriate reporting mechanisms can distort policy.

With proper support, extensive livestock-keepers, including pastoralists, can help address the climate challenge, while protecting the environment and enhancing livelihoods. Supporting the production of meat, milk and other products from extensive rangelands, however, must go hand-in-hand with reducing the impacts of industrial livestock production and shifting the diets of the ‘consumption elite’ in richer countries and areas.

Credits

Front: pastoralist in Gujarat. Photo: Natasha Maru

Back: Russia - Autumn migration of Nenets reindeer herders Yamal Peninsula. Philip Burgess



Find out more

This briefing is a summary of key points in the report, *Are livestock always bad for the planet? Rethinking the protein transition and climate change debate*. The report is produced by the PASTRES research programme, together with a number of partners.

To download the full report and for details of partners, a list of references and information sheets, visit www.pastres.org/livestock-report

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