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Improve the welfare of animals
Enhance food security
Address climate change

Farm Animal Welfare Recommendations

HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

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United Nations Climate Change Conference
Doha, Qatar • COP 18/CMP 8
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Animal Agriculture and the Global Climate Crisis

Farm animal welfare involves both the physical and psychological well-being of an animal. How they are raised and treated can have important repercussions, not just for animal welfare, but for environmental sustainability, food security, and the economic well-being of farmers.

The animal agriculture sector, which raised more than 70 billion land animals in 2010, is one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions worldwide, responsible for an estimated 18 percent of human-induced emissions[1] and projected to grow 39 percent by 2050.[2] Establishing a food-secure, sustainable, and welfare-friendly future requires immediate changes in farm animal production and consumption patterns.

ACTION

1. **COP Decision on Agriculture: In Doha, the Conference of Parties (COP) should call for a series of SBSTA stakeholder workshops and invite further submissions on agriculture from parties and observers. This work should be broad-based and go toward long-term policy and finance that improves food security and long-term sustainability, enhances the ability of farmers and farming systems to adapt to climate change, mitigates emissions, and improves animal welfare.** Decision 2/CP.17 requested an SBSTA exchange of views on agriculture and a COP agriculture decision in Doha. Parties should capitalize on this opportunity, and any successor agreement(s) to the Kyoto Protocol must include agriculture and address the drivers of agricultural emissions. Climate change poses significant threats to ecosystems and biodiversity,[3] as well as human health, especially in low-income nations.[4] Practically every stage of meat, egg, and dairy production exacerbates these problems,[5] and holistic solutions are essential. In the case of agriculture, it is imperative that the UNFCCC evaluate, enhance, and safeguard animal welfare, as well as achieve other social and environmental goals.

2. **REDD+ Drivers: In Doha, the SBSTA should (1) report to the COP on the status of its work on drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+), pursuant to decision 1/CP.16, Appendix II(a), and (2) further the work of the SB 36 in identifying how to address drivers, including a request for further submissions from parties and observers, as well as a clear timeline for completing this work.** Deforestation and forest degradation—of which animal agriculture, for grazing and feed crop production, is a significant driver[6]—destroy carbon sinks in addition to releasing billions of metric tons of CO_2 into the atmosphere. REDD+ must address the drivers of deforestation to be successful, and it should work more quickly toward this goal than it has thus far. Topics for further submissions should at least include: (1) how to specifically address international as well as national drivers; and (2) how addressing drivers might interact with other aspects of REDD+ as well as other UNFCCC mechanisms.

3. **National, Regional, and Local Strategies: Governments at all levels must specifically include humane solutions for farm animal production when designing climate change mitigation and adaptation plans.** Although climate change is a global problem requiring global solutions, there is also a need for national and sub-national solutions. Such solutions should address agriculture in an equitable manner that promotes resilient landscapes, food security, animal welfare, and the ability to adapt to climate change.

4. **Sustainable Consumption: Governments and civil society must address drivers of agricultural emissions by raising awareness and implementing policies about the health, climate, and environmental benefits of reducing meat, egg, and milk consumption, particularly in developed nations and amongst higher income urban consumers in mid-income nations.** A shift toward plant-based diets will reduce GHG emissions.[7,8,9,10,11] Leading public health and nutrition experts have confirmed that such a shift can be achieved without compromising nutrition,[12,13] and that a reduction in the consumption of animal products will likely lead to health benefits,[14] as well as other environmental benefits.[15]

Endnotes

1 Steinfeld H, Gerber P, Wassenaar T, Castel V, Rosales M, and de Haan C. 2006. Livestock's long shadow: environmental issues and options. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, p. xxi.

2 Pelletier N and Tyedmers P. 2010. Forecasting potential global environmental cost of livestock production 2000-2050. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America 107(43):18371-18374.

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5 Steinfeld H, Gerber P, Wassenaar T, Castel V, Rosales M, and de Haan C. 2006. Livestock's long shadow: environmental issues and options. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, p. 79.

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12 Position of the American Dietetic Association. 2009. Vegetarian Diets. Journal of the American Dietetic Association 109(7):1266-1282.

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