



In collaboration with: EMBRAPA & the São Paulo State Forum on Climate Change and Biodiversity
International Workshop on Solutions to Deforestation and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Caused by Cattle Expansion

Key stakeholders reach a consensus on changes needed for a revolution in cattle ranching in the Amazon, including intensification techniques to increase the number of head of cattle per hectare.

Workshop Summary

August 26th-27th, 2009 São Paulo, Brasil. Over one hundred stakeholders met for a day and a half of presentations, expert panels, discussions and working groups to address the technical, financial and market challenges and solutions to deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) caused by cattle expansion in the Amazon.

August 24th-25th, 2009 Field trip to cattle ranches and forest frontier in Acre State. Stakeholders gained on-the-ground perspective of cattle ranch operations, and how moderate intensification can be successfully implemented in the Amazon; they also visited the Embrapa Acre Forest Reserve to learn about sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products.

The workshop brought together for the first time, stakeholders from every link in the cattle supply chain in Brazil, from ranchers to meatpackers, bankers and retailers, as well as representatives from state and national government, academia and national and international NGOs. Presenters at the workshop demonstrated that the cattle industry is responsible for over three quarters of deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon, and this forest loss accounts for over 40% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions, while contributing less than 5% to the national gross domestic product.

A panel on increasing productivity and pasture management supplemented the field trip, showing how moderate intensification can be carried out successfully in the Amazon, so herd sizes can be maintained or even increased without the need for additional land. A working group refined the specific challenges to spreading knowledge of these techniques and set out the actions required.

The role of positive incentives and procurement policies was addressed, including the prerequisites of property registration, sustainable production standards (such as the Iniciativa Brasileira) and a system to trace cattle from their origin. A panel on public and private financing of the livestock industry highlighted the need for increased cooperation among financiers of all the links in the supply chain, and for government to effectively implement environmental policies.

The participants agreed that the cattle industry poses a grave environmental threat, and that all stakeholders share accountability for implementing the needed changes. For the first time, there was consensus on four essential building blocks for an environmentally and socially responsible cattle industry:

- Zero deforestation in cattle production is the essential goal;
- Application of "semi-intensification" techniques to reduce the land requirements per head of cattle is now proven to be economically viable;
- A system of traceability to identify "non-deforestation" leather and beef is needed; and
- Smart and sustainable financing should be made available to responsible producers.

A dialogue with the entire production chain is needed to produce consensus on how to allocate the costs and benefits of implementing these measures. The workshop concluded with a commitment among participants to continue to work together to develop and apply effective solutions.

A full report on the outcomes of the workshop is available. For further information, contact Program Manager Nathalie Walker at walkern@nwf.org