Two ways to tackle livestock’s contribution to the climate crisis:

Transition away from industrial livestock to smallholder systems

The Issue
We cannot address climate change without reducing the production and consumption of industrial meat and dairy.

Trade Policy

The livestock industry is a major cause of climate change

The global food system accounts for 29 percent of today’s global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, say scientists, with meat and dairy responsible for most of it. Livestock now generate more GHG emissions than all of the world’s transport combined. Nearly half of it is in the form of methane, a gas 28 times more effective than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in our atmosphere but, quick to disappear once we stop producing it.

80 percent of the current growth of the global meat and dairy industry comes from the expansion of factory farms, hobbled by corporate consolidation and vertical integration across the world. In 2005, just four companies ( Tyson, Cargill, National Beef and JBS) accounted for 30 percent of the world’s beef production.

If we did nothing else to stop climate change (stop extracting and burning fossil fuels, convert to renewable energies, etc.) except cut back on industrial meat, the planet would still be in danger of the ‘mid-century warming scenario’ of 4°C by the end of the century.

The footprint of factory farms vs. agroecological production

Factory farms

- Methane emissions from animal fermentation
- Air pollution, poor air quality, and working conditions
- Emissions from feedlots used to produce livestock
- Loss of biodiversity, wildlife habitats
- ProDrives rabbit waste
- Carbon pollution, health of nearby communities
- Limited deodoration, animal welfare
- Multifunctional tractors, transport, energy, fuel
- Economic security, small producers
- Feasts and fairs
- Local, seasonal crops
- Small-scale farmers and indigenous communities
- Carbon capture (suitable farming keeps soil healthy)

Small-scale farms

- Methane emissions from enteric fermentation
- Food waste, over-grazing in certain areas, often due to lack of access to land
- Limited deodoration, animal welfare
- Multifunctional tractors, transport, energy, fuel
- Economic security, small producers
- Feasts and fairs
- Local, seasonal crops
- Carbon capture (suitable farming keeps soil healthy)

Industrial livestock production is responsible for massive GHG emissions from feed fuels, fertilizers, mangers and large-scale deforestation and land degradation.

It generates numerous other impacts including environmental pollution, exploitation of workers, destruction of small family farms, abuses of millions of animals and global health emergencies such as antibiotic resistance and swine flu.

Technologies: Fats could reduce no more than 60 percent of current livestock emissions, according to the most optimistic FAO scenarios. A system change is imperative.

Industrial meat and milk is kept artificially cheap through public subsidies, policies that externalize their real costs and prop up the entire cycle of surplus production and trade.

Cutting production of industrial meat is therefore essential to tackling the climate crisis, including by changing demand side dynamics and stress improved diets and reducing feed waste.

The Issue
To be clear, the problem is industrial meat and dairy

The global rise in meat and dairy consumption is projected to grow by 15 and 60 percent respectively by 2050 if not dramatically reduced, this would result in exceeding the entire climate budget set for 2050 in the Paris Agreement.

Per capita meat consumption continues to be highest in North America, Brazil and the EU and is growing rapidly in Asia. If countries with excessive per capita consumption limited their consumption to the World Health Organization recommended levels, global GHG emissions would decline by 40 percent.

Most countries in the Global South have lower levels of per capita meat and dairy consumption, but their urban middle classes are increasingly adhering to Western style diets, including excessive meat and dairy. Foreign food companies, fast food chains and supermarkets target these countries for growth.

The Issue
Consumption must be addressed

And yet, small-scale farmers, herders and pastoralists are often blamed.

Corporate lobby groups, scientists and development agencies often paint small-scale livestock holders in poor countries as the climate culprits because of their animal low efficiency. In converting cows to meat and milk on a per capita basis.

Yet it is a narrow focus on efficiency and emissions intensity ignores the multiple benefits of mixed, multifunctional and biodiverse smallholder production systems. These include improving soil health, greater climatic resilience and other environmental and public health benefits.

Small-scale meat and dairy production is already well tailored to local food systems that support the moderate meat and dairy consumption levels that the rest of the world must achieve.

For a fully referenced version, visit GRAIN at grain.org and IATP Europe at itap.org
Redirect the subsidies

Industrial meat and dairy production is heavily subsidized by around $310 billion from OECD governments each year. In 2015, China and Brazil also channelled significant public funds into the growth of their own transnation- al meat and dairy corporations.

Public subsidies, credits and other fiscal sup- port measures for massive industrial meat and dairy factories, such as the proposed 200,000 cow farm in Spain, should be inves- tigated on an annual basis and terminated. Public funds should instead be directed to sustainable small-farmer grazing and agroecological and pastoral production methods, and to help larger farmers transition towards these practices.

Subsidies would also go to building or re- habilitating local infrastructure laboratories, meal and meat processing, research, sanitation, and services to local livestock and dairy mar- kets thrive.

Divert from industrial meat and dairy

Meat and dairy corporations have a vested in- terest in increasing the consumption and produc- tion of industrial meat and dairy and have repeatedly blocked government actions that would undercut demand for their products.

Brazil and other institutional investors must account for the true carbon costs and climate risks of their agricultural in- vestments and divest from companies that harm the climate.

Rather than perpetuating factory farm ex- pansion and the industrial model through carbon credits and carbon offsets, climate funds should be directed towards the growth of agricultural systems by supporting integrated agroecological methods and their producers.

Meat and dairy companies and their lobby groups must be prevented from using influ- ence on decision making in the public interest, including through stricter rules on campaign finance, and ensuring that there is no conflict of interest in government and internation- al policy making.

Public-private partnerships to promote large-scale, intensive livestock farming should be eliminated.

Stop and rollback so-called free trade and investment deals

Trade and investment agreements, like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Asia-Pac- ific Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Transla- tional and Investment Agreement (TTIP), expand markets for the global meat and dairy complex. They enable the distri- bution of cheap meat, dairy and feed and pre- vent competition of only the largest meat and milk suppliers, as well as regulations that dis- criminate against producers. This model, for example, is responsible for:

- 70 million dairy farms in India face im- mediate import threats from the RECP trade deal being negotiated with the dairy powerhouse New Zealand, which expects cheap milk products to flood their market
- 74,000 cattle farmers in Argentina will lose their livelihoods from a proposed Mercosur Agreement trade deal that will destroy their government regulation. As such, this will grow import demand from the European Union, where sanitary regulations are weaker, and the Trade in Services Agreement now be- comes negotiated by 28 countries that profit from governments taking measures to reduce livestock climate emissions, and deregulation of food policy. GAIN reports are available as environmental and public health risks that interact with corporate prof- its through the TPP CETA and TTIP will harm future efforts to regulate and reform these industries.

These deals must be stopped and replaced with policies that allow countries and peo- ple to benefit and support their local systems.

Reduce meat consumption, eliminate over-consumption

It is crucial to work toward a reduction of industrial meat and dairy, especially red meat, in the hope of over consumption such as North America, Europe, Brazil and China. This can be encouraged by revising和完善 nutrition guidelines and giving them the teeth of enforceability.

A key strategy to achieve this is to make industrial meat and dairy more expensive and reflect the high costs of biodiversity loss and other damages caused by the activity and not just reducing fiscal subsidies.

Some of these measures must be executed in a way that does not penalize lower income consumers or small-scale producers.

Public education programmes and media campaigns are necessary to help people understand what food is and expect constructive change. This is a non-abstract issue that will be essential for any serious efforts to reduce livestock climate emissions, and deregulation of food policy. GAIN reports are available as environmental and public health risks that interact with corporate prof- its through the TPP CETA and TTIP will harm future efforts to regulate and reform these industries.

These deals must be stopped and replaced with policies that allow countries and peo- ple to benefit and support their local systems.

Support small scale production and local markets

There are over 660 million small-scale farmers and 2 billion people who de- pend on livestock for their livelihoods and who feed billions of people every day with quality meat, dairy and eggs in a sustain- able manner. This hugely neglected public ap- pearance and support.

Policies and programmes should focus on supporting the small scale producer- s and the local markets that they supply. Livestock producers should be supported, as opposed to large agro-industrial production, with regenerative practices, and soil, water and pest management, that help cut greenhouse gas emissions.

We need to invest in community proj- ects and initiatives that seek to replenish both local and rebuild our essential food systems.

This fact sheet is based on GRAN’s “Grabbing the bull by the horns. It’s time to cut industrial meat and dairy to save the climate.” January 2017. https://www.grain.org.za/TTCA and the IATP research on iiasa.org/industrialsubs. For more information, visit GRAN at grain.org.za and IATP Europe at iatp.org.