

Eurogroup for Animals

Contact: Camilla Linnéa Margareta Björkbom

Email: c.bjorkbom@eurogroupforanimals.org

World Federation for Animals

Contact: Clara Gobbe

Email: clara.gobbe@wfa.org

Submission to the Sharm El-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security, for consideration at SB58

World Federation for Animals and Eurogroup for Animals submission in regard to the elements of the joint work referred to in paragraphs 14–15 of FCCC/CP/2022/L.4. This submission builds on our [joint position paper published during COP27](#).

We welcome the adoption of the Sharm El-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security. We applaud the UNFCCC and Member States in seeking to advance the unique potential of sustainable agriculture in tackling climate change. In this context, we would encourage the Sharm El-Sheikh joint work to address the emissions and vulnerabilities caused by industrial animal farming and present holistic solutions, such as silvopasture and agroecology in tandem with a shift towards more plant-based food systems.

Key Messages

- 1. Shift towards high-animal welfare food systems:** Industrial animal farming negatively affects the environment at all stages of production, with a far greater impact than other forms of agriculture. Agricultural and fisheries systems characterised by higher animal welfare, including well-run agroecological and integrated systems have lower greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions, have higher carbon sequestration potential compared to industrial animal farming, and are more resilient to climate change and disasters, thereby supporting mitigation and adaptation.
- 2. Tap onto the significant mitigation potential of plant-based food production and consumption:** A shift to plant-rich diets and moderating the consumption of animal products can significantly reduce land use and global food systems emissions, as well as the strain on water resources while improving food security.

Systems that disregard animal welfare contribute to climate change

The industrial exploitation of animals contributes significantly to climate change. Using a Tier 2 methodology (IPCC, 2006) and life cycle assessment approach, FAO estimates that animal agriculture contributes 14.5 per cent of total anthropogenic emissions (1). In 2019, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) estimated an even higher contribution of the sector, finding that “*approximately 25 percent of the globe’s GHG emissions come from land clearing, crop production and fertilization, with animal-based food contributing about 75 percent of that.*” (2).

A closer examination of livestock-related contributions to climate change shows that the production and processing of feed for industrial systems of animal agriculture, primarily due to land-use change, accounts for almost half of the sector’s GHG emissions, according to FAO. Manure storing and processing associated with industrial production adds around ten per cent, with an additional six per cent coming from the processing and transportation of industrially produced animal products (3).

Similarly, industrial capture fisheries contribute to climate change through emissions from fishing vessels (4), direct disturbance to ocean sediments (5), and loss of carbon sequestration capacity due to the removal of aquatic animals (6). Bottom trawling, a significant contributor to overfishing, is a particularly harmful method that releases significant amounts of carbon that would otherwise be stored in the seabed. Aquaculture is another contributor to climate change, with an average emission intensity comparable to the production of terrestrial monogastric species (7).

High-welfare animal agriculture and plant-rich diets critical in stabilising and mitigating climate impact

Higher welfare and lower input systems can be a part of the solution. Silvopasture and agroecological solutions and grass-based and mixed-farm systems have greater capacities for carbon sequestration (8). For example, on degraded land, such carefully managed systems could offset a share of the emissions from livestock (9). Local breeds are more adaptable to local climate conditions and often have lower emissions per unit of production (10).

This shift should happen in tandem with a move towards more plant-rich food systems. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that “*diets high in plant protein and low in meat and dairy are associated with lower GHG emissions.*” (11) This is consistent with long-standing UN guidance, including from WHO and FAO. The EAT-Lancet Commission also recognises that “*food is the single strongest lever to optimize human health and environmental sustainability on Earth*”. It adds that diets “*rich in plant-based foods and with fewer animal source foods...are ‘win-win’ in that they are good for both people and planet.*” (12)

A 2020 study concluded that even if all fossil fuel emissions were ceased immediately, the current state of global food systems would make it impossible to meet the 1.5°C target, and challenging to meet the 2°C target (13). However, by adopting plant-rich diets and moderating the consumption of animal products, food system emissions could be decreased by 47 per cent compared to the status quo.

Animal welfare critical for adaptation strategy

Building resilience among the people and communities most at risk from the impact of climate shock is crucial as natural disasters become increasingly frequent and intense. Smallholder livestock keepers, fisherfolk and pastoralists are often the hardest hit by climate-induced disasters, and they rely heavily on their animals for survival. Therefore, protecting animals is a priority to safeguard livelihoods. This is in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction priorities for action, which call for protecting livestock as “productive assets” to reduce the impact of disasters ([14](#)), and defining livestock and working animals as the key productive assets of people experiencing poverty and those most vulnerable to the impact of disasters.

Finally, besides its climate change mitigation potential, reducing meat consumption is an essential adaptation strategy as it reduces the strain on land and water resources and ultimately mitigates vulnerability to climate change and resource scarcity, according to the IPCC ([15](#)).