CLEARING THE AIR ON 'LIVESTOCK AND CLIMATE CHANGE'

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Summary

With global meat production projected to more than double the current rate by 2050 (Smith *et al*., 2007) and the majority of this livestock production growth occurring in the developing world (Wood *et al*., 2006), assessment of the holistic impacts of food animals in the context of global and regional environmental policy and food security becomes imperative. Much of the growth in the global livestock sector will occur in areas that are currently forested (i.e., parts of South America and South East Asia). It has been well established that significant reductions of carbon sequestering forests will have large effects on global climate change. The United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) publication titled 'Livestock's Long Shadow' (LLS; FAO *et al*., 2006) has been most instrumental in pointing the public attention to the kinds of environmental consequences in which livestock production can potentially result, with special emphasis on climate change. Unfortunately, some of the report's key conclusions (i.e., livestock produces more greenhouse gases (GHG) than transportation) have been applied regionally and out of their intended context, leading to significant consequences on major public policy affairs. For example, the statement that 18% of anthropogenic global GHGs is caused by livestock production and that livestock produces more GHG than transportation (FAO *et al*., 2006) is based on inappropriate or inaccurate scaling of predictions, and thus is open to intensive debate throughout the scientific community.