



The Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock (GASL) takes position on the report:

“Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems”

The Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock’s (GASL) vision is to enhance the contribution of livestock systems to sustainable development. As such, GASL is aware and part of the discussion on greater sustainability in food production and consumption habits, which are addressed in the EAT Lancet Report, dated 16 January 2019.

GASL recognizes that action is needed to address a range of interrelated factors such as climate change, pollution, food waste and malnutrition (undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity). The EAT Lancet report offers potential solutions such as supporting small- and medium-sized farms and adapting agricultural practices to local soil conditions, water capacity and other factors.

The EAT Lancet report also recommends global "common denominators" for sustainable nutrition that include a significant reduction in meat consumption. However, it acknowledges that: “*in some contexts, animal production can also be essential for supporting livelihoods, grassland ecosystems services, poverty alleviation and benefits of nutritional status (particularly in children and vulnerable populations)*”. GASL stresses that many people living in poverty are highly dependent on livestock as a source of income and nutrients for their diet. Advice on sustainable nutrition therefore has to be flexible and tailored to different cultures and food availability, including societies dependent on a high intake of animal-sourced food. Furthermore, GASL underlines that sustainable livestock systems also have substantial socio-economic benefits in feeding the world, maintaining natural grassland biodiversity and providing stewardship for the sustainable use of land.

GASL’s approach to the sustainability of food and agriculture in general and of livestock agri-food systems in particular differs from that of the EAT-Lancet Commission in a number of important ways: it is multidimensional, multistakeholder, multifaceted, and it embraces the enormous diversity of livestock agri-food systems globally.

- 1) GASL’s approach to sustainable livestock is framed by the United Nations *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This enables the consideration of balancing the impact of livestock across many dimensions taking into consideration the mitigation of the negative impacts while enhancing the positive benefits of livestock systems. The many opportunities include livestock’s roles in healthy, nutritious diets; in food security; in mixed farming systems; in society and agricultural heritage; in resilient livelihoods; and in economic growth and poverty elimination, while mitigating impacts on greenhouse gas emissions, nutrient loss to water and enhancing animal welfare.
- 2) GASL is a multistakeholder partnership. Rather than taking a top-down view, GASL involves all stakeholders in discussion and negotiation towards sustainable outcomes. This involves representation from the public sector, private sector, academia, research, donors, NGOs, social movements and community-based organizations, and inter-governmental and multi-lateral institutions.
- 3) GASL’s proposed interventions towards sustainable livestock agri-food systems are multifaceted. For example, rather than assigning an important burden of greenhouse gas emissions from livestock to a single intervention – reducing meat consumption – GASL sees many additional ways in which environmental sustainability can be enhanced. For example, GASL recognizes:
  - (i) important gains that have and will continue to be made in reducing emission intensities;
  - (ii) opportunities for carbon capture to off-set livestock emissions through improving pastures and afforestation (e.g. silviculture and silvopastoral systems);
  - (iii) recycling opportunities by promoting a circular bio-economy and reducing loss and waste across livestock agri-food systems. GASL adopts a full lifecycle analysis approach when exploring the opportunities offered and risk posed to sustainability by livestock agri-food systems.
- 4) When looking at livestock agri-food systems, GASL recognizes their enormous diversity and the very different objectives, roles played and risks faced by them in different contexts. Broadly speaking livestock agri-food



systems can be described as extensive (land-intensive); labor intensive (usually in some combination with crops, aquaculture and forestry); or capital-intensive. These systems have evolved over millennia to suit the natural endowments, culture and food preferences of the populations they serve.

- 5) GASL understands that behavior change is required across all scales of decision making and has a focus on working with multiple stakeholders to share lessons of sustainable practices through case studies and sector initiatives while also ensuring that science-based evidence is informing transition pathways to more transformational solutions.

There are livestock systems whose environmental impacts are low and others that can be implemented in locations where different forms of agriculture are not feasible. Livestock can be seen as a useful extension of the food system, and could become a low-impact component of a diverse and healthy diet. GASL acknowledges a positive evolution in this regard. For example:

- Resource use efficiency is improving and emission intensity is decreasing, and this momentum can be accelerated.
- Waste and by-products utilization at different scales based on by-products from biofuel production and the brewing industry. In fact, it may be challenging to meet the EAT-Lancet report's own objective of halving food waste without livestock.
- Grassland ecosystems restoration where regenerative grazing contributes to carbon sequestration, biodiversity and water retention.
- The balancing/buffering function of livestock in the food supply as most livestock products are available year-round, as opposed to vegetal products, which are often highly seasonal. Surplus biomass can be "stored" in animals and drawn from in the case of need. This ability to store and to be mobile confers a resilience to climate change that fixed agriculture cannot compare with.
- The interconnection between livestock and agriculture in a circular bio-economy (e.g. manure from livestock improves crop biomass) promotes the sustainability of each other.

Additionally, livestock provide distinct nutritional advantages that are not easily replaced. Micronutrient deficiencies affect more than 2 billion people globally. Deficiencies in zinc, vitamin A and iron lead to stunting, anaemia, compromised immune functions and impaired cognitive development. Animal-source foods are dense in readily bio-available essential micronutrients such as vitamin B12, riboflavin, calcium, iron, zinc and various essential fatty acids, which are difficult to obtain in adequate amounts from plant-based foods alone. Healthy nutrition is particularly important during the first 1,000 days of life – during pregnancy, lactation and early childhood. Including even modest amounts of ASFs in diets adds much-needed nutritional value. Less than one-third of infants in LMICs meet the minimum dietary diversity standards needed for proper growth.

Moreover, omnivores thrive on a variety of foods, explaining why they can live almost everywhere.

Livestock systems can be further optimized, but they can and do contribute to making food systems more sustainable and populations healthier. GASL advocates the increasing positive impacts of sustainable livestock and ensures that the livestock sector simultaneously responds to growing demand, contributes to development objectives and mitigates potential harm at global, regional, national and local levels.

It is crucial for stakeholders to continue working together to share experiences and expand the knowledge base. GASL contributes to this by facilitating dialogue among all stakeholders, assembling and communicating evidence and advocating for practice and policy change.

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For the Guiding Group of the Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock

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