PUBLICATION

Greenhouse gas emissions from ruminant supply chains

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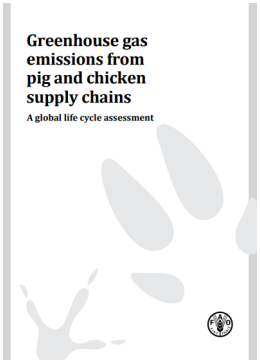
Abstract:

In decades to come, the global demand for livestock products will continue to increase driven by growing populations, incomes and urbanization. As a consequence the sector needs to produce more but in a context of increasing natural resource scarcity and challenges posed by climate change. In 2010, the ruminant sector contributed about 29 percent to global meat production (equivalent to 81 million tonnes) of which 79 percent is from the cattle sector and the remaining from buffalo and small ruminants. Global milk production in 2010 was 717 million tonnes with milk production from the cattle sector contributing the bulk, about 83 percent of global production. While ruminants play an important role in providing high quality protein essential for human diets, they are an important source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The demand for bovine meat, mutton and milk is forecasted to grow at a rate of 1.2 percent, 1.5 percent and 1.1 percent, respectively, during the period 2006-2050. To avoid significant increases in total GHG emissions from the sector, a reduction of the intensity of emissions is required. This report presents a life cycle analysis of the GHG emissions arising from ruminant supply chains around the year 2005. This first comprehensive and disaggregated global assessment of emissions enables the understanding of emission pathways and hotspots. This is a fundamental and initial step to identify mitigation strategies and inform public debate.

Image credit: FAO

Contributors

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



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