

# Animals: helping us achieve the Future We Want



At the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), we work towards the urgent international recognition of animal welfare as an essential element of sustainable development. Global adherence to animal welfare principles will have significant positive impacts on poverty eradication, food security, public health, climate change and the preservation of biodiversity. Simply put, helping animals helps people.

## Animals matter to people

Over 1 billion of the world's poor depend on animals for jobs, food, income, transport, social status and cultural identification. Good welfare practices improve animal survival, reduce production costs and increase profits, and so enhance the productivity of the poor's only productive asset and help eradicate poverty.

As the world's poorest people are the most vulnerable to disasters, it is also vital to integrate animal welfare into disaster resilience and emergency planning. This helps to prevent the unnecessary suffering of livestock and people and significantly enhances post-disaster recovery.

## Animals matter to sustainable development

Animal wellbeing impacts on the most pressing issues of our time. In just one key example, livestock is crucial to food security. Unfortunately, our collective response to the growing demand for animal protein has been the expansion of low-welfare intensive livestock production and farming practices. Choosing this unsustainable path has led to a number of unintended consequences affecting:

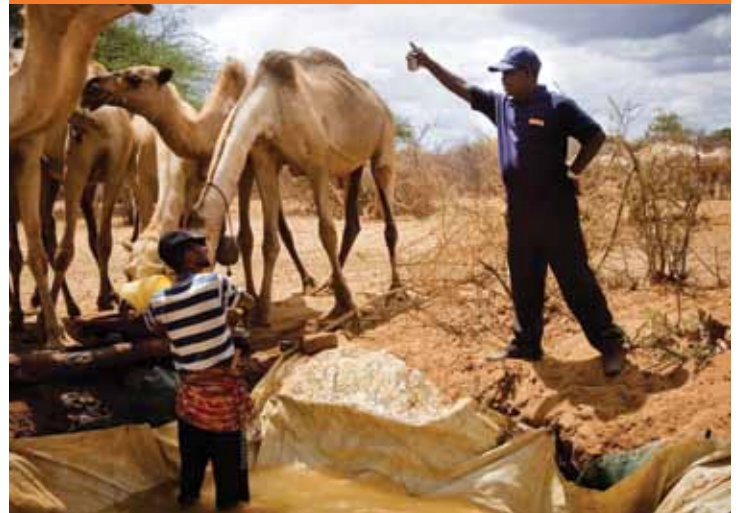
- **global food security**, as grains are diverted from people to livestock
- **greenhouse gas emissions**, as forests and pastures are replaced by arable land for livestock feed production
- the occurrence and global costs of **zoonotic diseases**, such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, *Campylobacter* and avian and swine flu
- **biodiversity**, as natural ecosystems and native animal habitats are destroyed and what remains is overexploited.

## Animal welfare offers answers

Making animal welfare a standard element for consideration in development areas such as disaster preparedness, wildlife protection, marine and dog management, and sustainable agriculture – for example by promoting sustainable livestock production that comprises animal welfare principles – represents an alternate and proven approach to achieving the Future We Want: one with food security, social stability, environmental sustainability and equitable economic growth.

## What is animal welfare?

Animal welfare refers to the physical and psychological wellbeing of an animal. The welfare of an animal can be described as good or high if the individual is fit, healthy, free to express natural behavior, free from suffering and in a positive state of wellbeing.



## The Future We Want is possible

To achieve it, the United Nations and all its Member States must:

- **acknowledge** that animals matter; that animal welfare is an important element of sustainable development; and that adherence to animal welfare principles will lead to positive impacts for poverty eradication, food security, public health, climate change and biodiversity
- **reflect** that acknowledgement by integrating animal welfare into the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

[www.wspa-international.org](http://www.wspa-international.org)

# Animal welfare: key to delivering food security



## Poor welfare farming feeds inequality

Current inequalities in food distribution mean that nearly 1 billion people experience hunger and a further 1 billion lack important micronutrients in their diets. Meanwhile, 1 billion others over-consume, creating a new public health epidemic of chronic conditions such as type-2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. To achieve global health and equity in nutrition, a balancing of over and under consumption is necessary.

The current failure to achieve universal food security can in part be accounted for by the lack of coordination and balance between animal-based and plant-based food production on a local, national and international scale. Globally, 53 per cent of all oil crops<sup>1</sup> and 38 per cent of all cereals<sup>2</sup> are used to feed livestock. To meet the vast feed demands of industrial animal production, large areas of pasture and forest have been converted to grow crops – displacing communities, limiting the grains available for people to eat, and contributing to food price volatility.

## Hidden costs of industrial livestock production

Livestock is one of our crucial global resources, providing people with employment, income security and essential outputs including draught power and manure for arable crops. The primary driver for industrialising livestock production is commercial; it is commonly assumed that higher animal welfare standards during production reduce profit margins. However, industrial systems externalise their real costs, causing the cost/benefit analysis to ignore factors such as:

- the large **stocks of carbon** released as pasture and forest are converted to arable land for feed production, which in turn increases pressure on capital-intensive efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (in contrast, pasture sequesters carbon)
- the occurrence and global costs of **zoonotic<sup>3</sup> and food-borne diseases** associated with industrialised livestock production.

In the post-2015 landscape universal food security and zero hunger can be achieved. To do this we must both better govern the balance between plant-based and animal-based foods and distribute food more equitably between and within countries. In addition, the drive for more efficient food production must include recognition that animals are more than a simple commodity, and that high welfare standards in farming enhance overall productivity without the negative side effects delivered by low-welfare intensive livestock production systems.

## For a future with food security and zero hunger

Full-scale intensification is not the inevitable future of livestock farming. It is possible to feed the world with humane sustainable farming, achieving nutrition for all by 2050 while avoiding the very real environmental and public health risks associated with intensification.

To achieve this, the United Nations and its Member States must:

- **include** farm animal welfare in agriculture and food security assessments and policies
- **recognise** that the industrialisation of livestock farming is a major challenge to food security
- **reduce** the quantity of arable crops fed to livestock, especially cereals, and seek a sustainable balance between animal and crop production
- **promote** sustainable diets and address food losses and waste in the supply chain
- **protect** food security in times of crisis by including animals in emergency response and recovery planning and policies at a national, regional and operational level
- **consider** how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), their targets and indicators can support specific and regionally-sensitive measures to ensure that global food production and consumption is sustainable and incorporates respect for animal welfare principles.

<sup>1</sup> Soybeans, palm oil and rapeseed

<sup>2</sup> Mainly wheat, maize and some rice

<sup>3</sup> Zoonotic diseases are those that can be transmitted from animals to humans

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