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.

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Animal welfare:
key to considering climate change

The devastating impact of climate change affects people and animals. Ocean acidification affects fish stock density; changing rainfall and temperature patterns reduce the productivity of livestock and consequently the food security, livelihoods and disaster resilience of communities that depend on them. With nearly a fifth of all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions emanating from livestock, farming models that integrate animal welfare, by focusing on the health and management of animals, and efforts to change human production/consumption patterns (quantity and type of food), will significantly reduce emissions.

Animals and climate change adaptation

Climate change will have far-reaching consequences for dairy and meat production, especially in vulnerable parts of the world where it is vital for nutrition and livelihoods. It leads to the degradation of crop and pasture lands, heightens the vulnerability of livestock systems and exacerbates existing stresses upon them. Good animal welfare is of paramount importance in addressing these challenges. For instance, breeds suited to the local environment are often more robust and resilient than breeds selected to maximise production alone.[1]

Protecting animals in disasters secures livelihoods

The consequences of climate change increase the risk of natural disasters occurring and magnify their impacts. As most of the world's poor people rely heavily on livestock and working animals for food security and livelihoods, protecting animals from the effects of climate change and associated natural disasters must be an integral part of any effective disaster response. Integrating animal welfare into disaster risk reduction, resilience and preparedness planning will significantly reduce suffering, facilitate and accelerate recovery and limit post-disaster aid dependency.

Animals and climate change – a few facts

- According to the FAO, when considering the entire food chain, meat production accounts for 14.5 per cent of the world's GHG emissions[2]

- The World Resources Institute (WRI) predicts an 82 per cent increase in meat consumption between 2006 and 2050[3]. If matched by increased production, the livestock sector is predicted to account for 70 per cent of the sustainable level of all global GHG emissions by 2050[4]

Animals and climate change mitigation

Less intensive farming, with higher potential for good welfare, often has a smaller environmental footprint. This is partly because high-yield, but health-compromised livestock have been shown to produce higher GHG emissions, and partly because pasture-based systems for cattle can reduce GHG emissions through grassland's capacity for carbon storage . Also, pasture-based dairy production with dual purpose breeds (milk and beef), can be more carbon efficient, with benefits for both resource input efficiency and animal welfare, a 'win-win' scenario[6].

Moreover, the World Resources Institute (WRI) has found that dairy and meat production in the developing world does not need to become more industrial to become more efficient. For example, improving the feeding (higher quality grasses) and health of cows and sheep (ruminants) can cut emissions per kilogramme of milk or meat in many developing regions by two-thirds. Small farms that mix livestock and crops provide promising opportunities.[7]

For a future with climate-safe animal and livestock production

Addressing climate change effectively will be crucial to the sustainability of the Post-2015 development agenda. Animal welfare can play a vital part in reducing GHG and, if considered properly, can contribute to reducing the environmental footprint of the agricultural sector.

To achieve this, WSPA recommends that the United Nations and its Member States:

- **acknowledge** that climate change affects animals and by extension the food security and livelihoods of those that depend on them
- **include** high welfare solutions for sustainable livestock production when designing climate change mitigation and adaptation solutions
- **consider** how the contribution of animals and animal welfare to climate change adaptation and mitigation can best be reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and their targets and indicators.

1 Food and Agriculture Organization, *Climate change and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture*, www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/022/mb386e.pdf
2 Food and Agriculture Organization, *Tackling Climate Change Through Livestock: A Global Assessment of Emissions and Mitigation Opportunities*, FAO, 2013
3 World Resources Institute (2013), *Creating a Sustainable Food Future; Interim Findings*, http://www.wri.org/publication/creating-sustainable-food-future-interim-findings
4 Pelletier, N. & Tyedmers, P. (2010), *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA, 107(43)*, 18371-18374
5 Soussana, J. F., et al. (2007), *Full accounting of the greenhouse gas (CO2, N2O, CH4) budget of nine European grassland sites, Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 121(1-2), 121-134
6 Best Foot Forward (2013), *Dairy GHG Emissions – Welfare and Dairy Beef Optimisation Opportunities*, Technical Research Report Prepared for the World Society for the Protection of Animals
7 World Resources Institute (2013), *Creating a Sustainable Food Future; Interim Findings*, p. 89-91 http://www.wri.org/publication/creating-sustainable-food-future-interim-findings

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