

PODCAST animal farming

Voice 1: Brian

Voice 2: Sarah

JINGLE to open podcast

VOICE 1

You're listening to the European Parliamentary Research Service podcast on animal farming.

VOICE 2 (to introduce the topic)

The livestock industry is responsible for nearly 15% of global greenhouse emissions. This is more than all cars, planes, trains and ships combined! But what options exist for reducing its carbon footprint? How effective might they be? And would consumers play along? Stay with us!

JINGLE to recognise the start of the podcast content part

VOICE 1

So just what is it that makes animal farming so polluting, and such a big contributor to climate change?

VOICE 2

Well, the first cause is methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that is released into the air when cows burp... But there is also nitrous oxide, from using synthetic *fertilizers* for agriculture, and carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels to run farm machinery.

VOICE 1

So, is eating less animal produce the solution? Well, some certainly argue so... but the truth is that we love our animal products... Around 30% of European food calories come from animals, and projections are that we will continue to eat more beef, pork and chicken... so how can we make cow burps more climate-friendly?

VOICE 2

Well, the answer may lie in technological innovation and new farming methods. For instance, giving cows feed that is more easily digestible could reduce the amount of methane they burp out.

VOICE 1

Emissions from manure could also be reduced by changing the way it is stored and used as a fertiliser. And improved management of land used for grazing could also increase carbon sequestering in soils.

VOICE 2

Breeding techniques are also being explored to increase the efficiency of farm animals. And we could also turn to in vitro meat! That is, meat which is grown in labs rather than as part of an animal. And I am not talking science fiction...

VOICE 1

The world's first cultured burger was served in London in 2013, weighing 142 grams and costing 250.000 Euros! So even if in vitro technology applied to meat production has great potential to reduce the industry's carbon footprint as well as our exposure to chemicals, there are still big issues related to cost and consumer acceptance...

VOICE 2

So, should we start considering these options?

VOICE 1

Well, if all farmers adopted the technologies and practices already available to reduce the carbon footprint of the livestock industry, we could slice it by almost a third!

VOICE 2

Some of these measures would be relatively easy to implement and would help farmers increase production levels, but others would weigh more heavily on their wallets so they would require some extra persuasion... and maybe some support from the Common Agricultural Policy.

VOICE 1

Another possibility is to follow the example of California and introduce new laws to push the industry to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, livestock farmers in the EU might become less competitive without extra measures to protect them!

VOICE 2

Labelling food according to its carbon footprint could also encourage consumers to go for the greenest products, and in countries such as Denmark they are taking this a step further and considering not only labelling but also taxing meat according to how polluting its production process is!

VOICE 1

Rates of up to 40% on different animal foods could curb emissions by more than the total generated by the aviation industry! But would consumers accept this? Supporters say it's not about forcing people to become vegetarian or vegan but to encourage them to eat less animal produce...

VOICE 2

However, without radically new approaches to reduce the carbon footprint of the livestock industry we may end up facing a difficult choice: our steak or our planet...!

VOICE 1

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MUSIC JINGLE TO CONCLUDE