



## COLLABORATION PLATFORM ON AGRICULTURE

# Sustainable Animal Nutrition Solutions for the Transition Towards Climate Neutral Livestock Production Systems

## Aligning metrics and methodologies to calculate environmental impact of feed

On December 17<sup>th</sup>, the online stakeholder event on “Sustainable Animal Nutrition Solutions for the Transition Towards Climate Neutral Livestock Production Systems: Aligning metrics and methodologies to calculate environmental impact of feed” took place, attended by at one point around 160 participants. The workshop was co-organised by the US and EU feed chain partners, AFIA, USSEC and FEFAC in the framework of the EU-US Collaboration Platform on Agriculture (CPA) supported by the European Commission’s Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) and the United States Department of Agriculture, USDA. The event was opened by Luis Carazo Jimenez, Head of Unit The Americas, DG AGRI and Ali Abdi, Senior Agriculture Counsellor in the US Mission to the EU. Both stressed the importance of the CPA as a useful mechanism for dialogue and mutual understanding, for public and private sectors to convene with common challenges and opportunities – e.g. formulating common approaches to sustainability metrics, a broad and important topic that merits careful consideration in terms of global trade.

The discussions in the specific sessions provided an in-depth exploration of challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for aligning methodologies and data to achieve environmental sustainability in animal nutrition and global trade. Stakeholders from various sectors emphasized the urgency of standardization, transparency, and fostering collaboration between the U.S. and EU to advance climate-neutral livestock systems. These insights were informed by contributions from industry experts, regulators, and academia, focusing on addressing inconsistencies, improving data accuracy, and leveraging public-private partnerships.



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## Key Challenges and Issues

### Regulatory and Methodological Inconsistencies

- **Fragmentation Across Regions:**
  - Frank Mitloehner highlighted how varying Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) methodologies and databases across regions lead to inconsistencies in reporting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For instance, California's regulatory framework employs three conflicting GHG assessment methods within a single agency, creating confusion for farmers and other stakeholders.
  - Jose Villalon pointed out that the "smorgasbord" of existing methods and databases for calculating GHG emissions often leads to selective reporting, competitive advantages based on inconsistencies, and accusations of greenwashing.
- **Data Collection Challenges:**
  - Anton van den Brink noted that supply chain data collection is inherently difficult due to the complexity of modern supply chains and limited traceability mechanisms. Companies often face hurdles when tracing commodities back to their origin.
  - There is often a disconnect between environmental footprint communities and trade realities, where ideal data collection practices clash with practical limitations.
- **Disparate Background Datasets:**
  - Misalignment in datasets, such as fertilizers and soil carbon storage, undermines the reliability of assessments. Ralph Rosenbaum emphasized the lack of harmonized background data sets as a significant barrier to achieving accurate LCA results.
- **Resource-Intensive LCAs:**
  - Conducting comprehensive LCA studies demands significant financial and human resources, making them inaccessible to smaller companies or sectors with fewer resources. This was highlighted as a concern by multiple speakers, including Lara Moody.



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## Opportunities for Improvement

### Harmonization and Standardization

- **Global Collaboration:**
  - Aligning U.S. and EU methodologies under internationally recognized frameworks such as the FAO's LEAP initiative could reduce duplication and inconsistencies while fostering trust among stakeholders. Nicolas Martin and Ralph Rosenbaum advocated for this approach as a cornerstone for meaningful progress.
- **Standardized and Transparent Databases:**
  - Open-access datasets such as the GFLI database were highlighted as essential tools for global harmonization. Stakeholders emphasized that universally agreed-upon resources would mark a significant step forward in ensuring reliability and comparability.
  - Mauro Cordella discussed the EU's Environmental Footprint (PEF/OEF) framework, which covers 16 impact categories but requires further refinement to address biodiversity and microplastic impacts.
- **Sector-Specific Guidelines:**
  - Developing granular, context-specific rules ensures methodologies reflect innovative practices such as precision feeding, soil carbon storage, and agroecological systems. Nicolas Martin emphasized the importance of balancing flexibility with specificity to accommodate advanced techniques.

### Public-Private Partnerships and Regulatory Support

- **Collaboration on Data Generation:**
  - Joint efforts to refine and expand databases were recommended to reduce costs, improve accessibility, and enhance credibility. This aligns with recommendations from Delanie Kellon and Marty Matlock.
- **Incentive-Based Compliance Models:**
  - California's incentive-driven "carrot approach," which provides financial incentives for sustainable practices, was highlighted as a potential model for broader adoption. Frank Mitloehner contrasted this with punitive methods employed in Europe, which he argued are less effective.



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- **Regulatory Clarity:**
    - Establishing clear regulatory frameworks that mandate standardized methodologies and disclosure requirements can reduce market confusion and skepticism. Jose Villalon strongly advocated for the inclusion of "regulatory guardrails" to ensure clarity and prevent misuse of data.
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## Detailed Session Highlights

### Session 1: Setting the Scene

Moderated by Maciej Golubiewski, this session focused on the foundational challenges and opportunities in achieving sustainable animal nutrition.

- **Key Challenges:**
  - Fragmentation of GHG methodologies undermines transparency and progress.
  - Lack of regulatory clarity leads to skepticism and inconsistent reporting.
- **Proposed Solutions:**
  - Global alignment of GHG assessment methods to avoid cherry-picking.
  - Sector equivalence to ensure fairness and standardization across markets.

### Session 2: Data Collection and Standardization

Anton van den Brink's report emphasized the importance of addressing uncertainties in Land Use Change (LUC) emissions.

- **Challenges:**
  - LUC emissions are a major contributor to the environmental footprint of feed, yet their calculation remains inconsistent.
  - The complexity of supply chains and the cost of data generation hinder comprehensive data collection.
- **Key Opportunities:**
  - Adoption of mass-balance approaches for footprint accounting.
  - Integration of the upcoming SBTi FLAG methodology for LUC emissions into regulatory frameworks.



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## Session 3: Benefits of Mutual Recognition

Speakers Ralph Rosenbaum and Lara Moody highlighted the benefits of harmonized environmental footprint methodologies.

- **Key Points:**
  - Harmonization reduces market distortion, inconsistencies, and reporting burdens.
  - Open Life Cycle Inventory (LCI) databases improve transparency and reliability.
- **Recommendations:**
  - Align EU and U.S. approaches under international frameworks.
  - Develop sector-specific databases to enhance granularity and applicability.

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## Comprehensive Recommendations

1. **Develop Globally Recognized Standards:**
  - Standardize methodologies to ensure consistency, reliability, and fairness in environmental accounting.
2. **Promote Open Data Sharing:**
  - Establish shared, accessible databases to improve data comparability and reduce resource burdens.
3. **Encourage Public-Private Collaboration:**
  - Build partnerships to refine methodologies, generate data, and share knowledge across sectors.
4. **Adopt Incentive-Based Models:**
  - Incentives, rather than penalties, can motivate farmers and companies to adopt sustainable practices.
5. **Leverage International Platforms:**
  - Utilize FAO's initiatives and global dialogues to align practices and foster collaboration.



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### **Conclusion**

The harmonization of environmental footprint methodologies and robust data-sharing frameworks between the U.S. and EU is critical for achieving global sustainability goals. By fostering collaboration, providing regulatory clarity, and adopting innovative public-private partnerships, stakeholders can drive meaningful progress in sustainable animal nutrition and climate-neutral livestock systems. Time-sensitive action and structured dialogue remain essential to achieving these objectives.