

Report claims consumers are uninformed regarding magnitude of livestock contribution to carbon emissions

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Credit: Jm Verastigue/public domain

Chatham House of the British Royal Institute of Affairs has published a report titled *Livestock – Climate Change's Forgotten Sector (Global Public Opinion on Meat and Dairy Consumption)* outlining the results of a survey the group commissioned to learn more about the public's perception of the impact that the livestock industry has on carbon

emissions and ultimately global warming. Their report suggests that consumers have vastly differing views on the subject based on where they live in the world.

In addition to offering results of the 12-country survey, the authors of the report offer some background information and opinions about the [carbon emission](#) impact of the livestock industry and conclude by offering suggestions of where changes might be made. They note that [global carbon emissions](#) from the livestock industry—which they claim currently account for 14.5% of total man-made global emissions—actually surpass that of global transportation and are mainly due to emissions released directly from animals in the form of belching, flatulence or from their excrement. The main animals involved in the industry are cows, pigs and chickens—globally pork is the most popular consumed meat due to its huge popularity in China. The report also offer graphs showing the largest meat consumers by country (China tops the list) along with growth forecasts. They also offer warnings, suggesting that the livestock industry is currently on a trajectory that will see meat consumption rise by 75 percent and dairy 65 percent over just the next six years.

Questions in the survey centered on awareness of carbon emissions, their source and the likely impact they are having on the planet. They found that on average, people in more developed countries such as those in the U.S. and Europe were far less well informed about the impact that the livestock industry has on the planet than were people living in places like China or even Brazil—the same groups tended to be more resistant to changing their lifestyle to reduce such emissions.

The authors of the report theorize that emissions from the [livestock industry](#) are not as well known as in other areas such as the transportation or energy sector because governments and private enterprise operations do not want to risk upsetting the public by

suggesting they eat less meat and/or dairy products. They note that discussing or negotiating livestock emission reductions is "largely absent" from international meetings on [climate change](#) and likewise is rarely if ever discussed at the national level by countries seeking to lower their carbon imprint. The solution, as they see it, is to begin an information campaign, because people are more likely to embrace change if they understand what is really happening.

More information: www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/2014/12/121214-12-consumers-uninformed-magnitude-livestock-contribution.pdf

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