

# Emissions set to soar as love of steak takes off in Asia

November 17 2015, by Dessy Sagita

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A restaurant employee in Jakarta prepares rendang, a traditional West Sumatranese meat dish

Climate change is the last thing on Maya Puspita Sari's mind as she tucks into a steak and splurges on ice cream, products that were once a luxury but are now a growing staple in the diets of millions of Indonesians.

But the livestock sector is a major contributor to [climate change](#)

—accounting for 14.5 percent of the total global amount of [greenhouse gas emissions](#) caused by human activity according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization—more than those produced from powering all the world's road vehicles, trains, ships and planes combined.

Emissions are predicted to jump dramatically as demand skyrockets—the FAO predicts consumption of meat and dairy is expected to have risen 76 percent and 65 percent respectively by 2050.

Nowhere is this insatiable appetite growing faster than in Asia, where a huge, new middle class is consuming animal products like never before as tastes change and incomes rise.

Consumers in China and India are driving this trend but demand in emerging economies such as Indonesia—a country of 250 million with a rapidly growing middle class—is also tipped to explode.

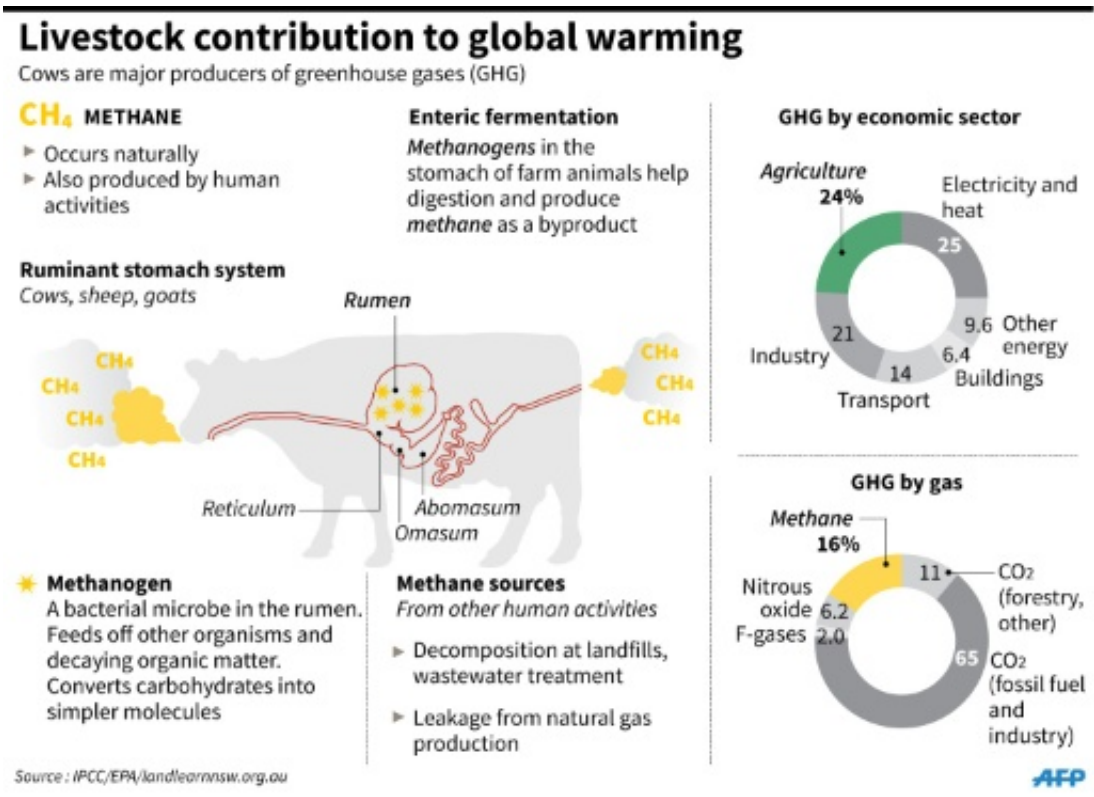
For consumers like Sari, a 31-year-old accountant living in the cosmopolitan capital Jakarta, livestock products that were once rarely consumed outside major religious holidays, if at all, are now in abundant supply.

She grew up in rural Sumatra eating red meat once or twice a year, with little on offer besides rendang, a traditional spicy beef stew.

"Meat is no longer a luxury now and there are so many choices, like steak," she told AFP. "In Jakarta you can find all kinds of [ice cream](#), yoghurt and other dairy products. It's great."

Christabelle Adeline Palar, a 25-year-old editor at a travel magazine, barely remembers eating meat as a child but now with a disposable income and an array of options, she knows what she wants.

"It's always meat," she said of her daily food choices, "except for days where I need to be more thrifty."



Graphic on methane produced by farm livestock. For an AFP feature. 135 x 97 mm

## Growing appetite

Indonesians still consume less meat than their Asian neighbours—averaging 2.7 kilograms per person every year, compared to 8 kilograms in Malaysia—but this is changing. London-based think tank Chatham House ranks Indonesia a top-ten nation for forecast growth in beef, pork and chicken consumption by 2021.

Jakarta and its affluent, densely populated suburbs lead the way in [meat consumption](#). People there—often young with cash to spare—eat around 12 kilograms of meat annually.

"Not only can they afford it, but there are many cafes and restaurants in the city that serve meat," Asnawi, chairman of the Indonesian Association of Meat Traders (APDI), who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told AFP.

Dairy producers are also optimistic. The Indonesian Association of Milk Producers says the market potential for dairy in Southeast Asia's largest economy is "tremendous", while New Zealand's Fonterra declared Indonesia one of its most important global markets when it opened its first local factory in September, predicting soaring demand as the "large and increasingly affluent population" seeks new products.

Nearly 90 percent of Indonesia's dairy is imported, mainly from New Zealand and Australia, but local producers are also riding the wave as consumption grows.

"Our family only had about 20 cows when we first relocated here. Now we have 70," dairy producer Rahmat said from his small ranch on the outskirts of Jakarta.

## **Curbs on consumption**

Ruminant animals emit huge amounts of methane, a gas that is more than 20 times more efficient than carbon dioxide in trapping the sun's heat, through belching and flatulence. Nitrous oxide, another potent greenhouse gas, is also released by manure and fertilisers.



In Asia, a huge, new middle class is consuming animal products like never before as tastes change and incomes rise

Growing population, urbanisation and incomes will increase global demand for meat and dairy, the FAO says, creating a "pressing" need to reduce the [livestock sector](#)'s environmental footprint.

A 2013 report by the UN body says emissions could be reduced by 30 percent if farmers adopted better practices—including quality feed, good manure management and improved breeding and animal health. But a recent review by the International Panel on Climate Change found the greatest potential for cutting emissions is a change in consumer habits.

Last year a report by Chatham House warned: "Dietary change is essential if global warming is not to exceed 2C,"—the UN target to limit

average global warming—but public awareness about the link between livestock and climate change remains poor.

In Indonesia, where livestock consumption is just taking off, president Joko Widodo has stated he wants the nation to be self-sustainable in beef production with 2019 the target, according to media reports.



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The creation of more cattle ranches could add to deforestation of a land already decimated by demand for palm oil, paper and rice. This year swathes of Southeast Asia choked in a thick haze as a result of slash and

burn farming, releasing more greenhouse gases each day than all US economic activity.

Greenpeace Indonesia's Bustar Maitar said: "In Brazil, (livestock) farming activities are conducted on a massive industrial scale. If that's what we're aiming for, of course it would affect our forests."



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But convincing people not to eat beef and yoghurt to prevent global warming could be a hard sell when public awareness of climate change is limited.

WWF Indonesia's Nyoman Iswarayoga told AFP: "Our public does not even understand the link between forest fires and emissions, let alone [meat](#) consumption. Changing lifestyles and mindsets takes time."

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