

Meat

as a Driver of

Deforestation

Forests, communities and Indigenous Peoples: victims of the industrial livestock and feedstock industry

Industrial and other forms of unsustainable livestock production have very real impacts on forests, climate and the environment. They also have devastating consequences for communities, Indigenous Peoples, peasants and women. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the global livestock sector contributes an estimated 14.5% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions using the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates, [1] as well as impacting water and biodiversity negatively. [2]

Unsustainable livestock production and the production of soy to feed livestock have an especially marked affect on climate change because they impact heavily on forests, which are cleared to create new pastures and farmland. The

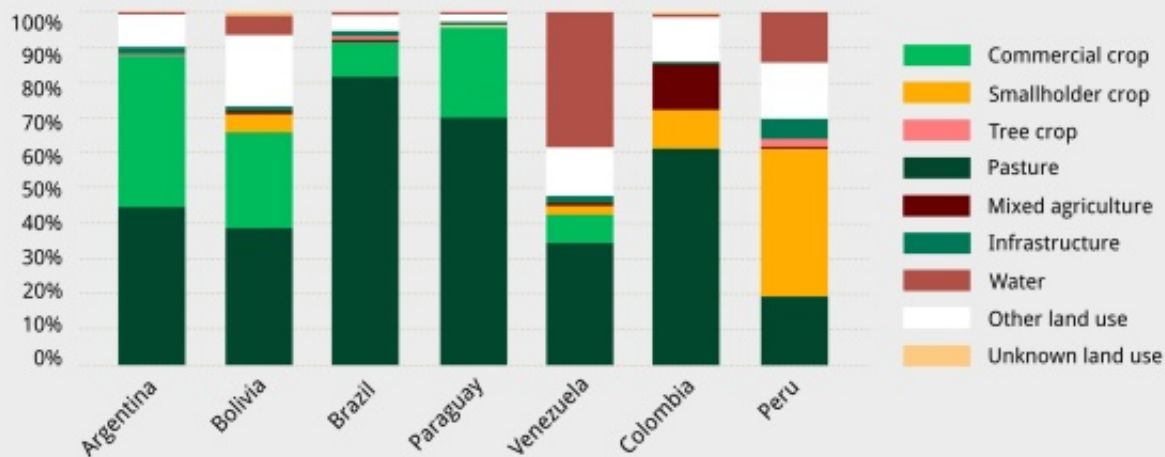
2016 State of the World's Forests clearly cites pasture for livestock as a leading driver of deforestation in a number of South American countries, and cites industrial agriculture as being responsible for 70% of deforestation in Latin

America. [3] Official national data in Bolivia, for example, supports this analysis: the country lost an area of 8.6 million hectares of forest between 2000 and 2013, which is roughly equivalent to two Switzerlands. [4]

Cattle grazing on a ranch in southern Brazil. Valerio Pillar/Flickr CC



Proportion of deforestation attributed to various drivers in seven South American countries, 1990-2005



State of the World's Forests 2016, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO),
<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5588e.pdf>

Numerous testimonies from communities, peasants and Indigenous Peoples impacted by the expansion of industrial livestock and feedstock production also document displacement, loss of land, numerous health issues and contamination of their territories. [5]

Large-scale, corporate agri-businesses continue to push out small-scale livestock keepers; and in countries like Brazil, large conglomerates have gained control of the market. In the case of Paraguay, through years of policies

favouring the expansion of agri-export business in the livestock and feedstock production sector, Indigenous Peoples have been displaced and reports indicate that around 20% of the population are in poverty. [6]

Global demand for livestock products is expected to increase by 70% by 2050. [7] Therefore it is critical that urgent and concrete action is taken by governments and the United Nations and its agencies, including FAO, to promote policies and practices to ensure that

industrial, intensive and other large-scale systems do not negatively affect other production systems, harm livelihoods or hinder the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food.

The following are excerpts of case studies in an upcoming publication by the Global Forest Coalition, in collaboration with researchers and social movements in a number of key countries, on the impacts of industrial livestock production.

Bolivia: Burning Forests

Pablo Solón and José Carlos Solón, Fundación Solón, Bolivia

Every year between July and December, Bolivia is a country in flames. Grasslands, bush land, shrubbery and forests are all on fire, and this is the main cause of deforestation in Bolivia. These fires are triggered mainly by agricultural and livestock activities. This is known in Bolivia as 'chaqueo', burning vegetation to make way for cultivation or pasture for livestock.

Research from CIFOR confirms that the contribution of cattle ranching to deforestation has become the most important driver of climate change in Bolivia. Between 1992 and 2004 cattle ranching was responsible for 27.4% of deforestation, but between 2000 and 2010 this figure leapt to 51.9%. This acceleration is still taking place: preliminary data shows that the figure for 2005 to 2010 has reached 60%. [8]



Cattle ranching in the Chaco, Paraguay. Miguel Lovera/CIC

Paraguay: Feeding the market, starving the people

Ines Franceschelli and Miguel Lovera

The population of Paraguay is increasingly vulnerable when it comes to food production, because the country's capacity to produce food for local consumption is being systematically undermined, as its territories are progressively targeted for the production of commodities for export, such as beef, and soy for animal feedstock. Agricultural exporters are also setting their sights on exports of other types of meat. The State itself is also promoting the production of "small livestock" for export purposes, which threatens to usurp even more land and resources.

The intense pressure that the communities now suffer, is due to the corporate interest in the production of goods to meet the demand for export products, such as meat and soybean forages and grains. This phenomenon restricts the communities' ability to maintain the traditional practices that promote the resilience of the ecosystems they traditionally manage.

Thus, it is necessary to change the way in which soils and productive resources are being used in Paraguay. This change necessarily involves the recovery of the land and traditional patterns of management, with a view to managing the land judiciously for the benefit of the whole population, distributing productive resources fairly. Paraguay's fertile soils can still produce surplus goods for export.

Brazil: Many losers in the Brazilian beef industry

Sergio Schlesinger, Consultant for FASE Brasil

Brazil has had a so-called 'national champions' policy for many years, which favoured large companies, which were expected to advance the country's interests as they prospered. This policy drove a process of mergers and acquisitions, not only in Brazil but also abroad. Big Brazilian conglomerates that benefited include JBS-Friboi, Marfrig and Brasil Foods (BRF).

In Mato Grosso do Sul, the state with the fourth biggest cattle herd in the country, the concentration of the beef market keeps on increasing. For example, according to studies made by FAMASUL (Agricultural Federation of Mato Grosso do Sul), between 2012 and 2015 the participation of JBS' slaughterhouses in the total slaughter

capacity of the state has grown from 47% to 61%. Assocarnes, an association of slaughterhouses and beef distributors of Mato Grosso do Sul, points out that JBS rented slaughterhouses with the sole purpose of closing them, to make sure the offer of bovine cattle is available to its own plants. [9]

As a result of this concentration, small cattle breeders with little structure and limited access to the market, tend to become captive to big slaughterhouses that pay them lower prices, grabbing their profits. The concentration and possible formation of oligopolies may also imply an increase of consumer prices, at the national and global levels.



Slaughter capacity of plants in Mato Grosso do Sul – 2012 and 2015

[1] FAO (2013). Tackling Climate Change through Livestock, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3437e/i3437e.pdf>

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] FAO (2016). State of the World's Forests 2016, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5588e.pdf>

[4] Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Agua (2015). Memoria Técnica Mapa de deforestación de Bolivia 2010 – 2013. Bolivia

[5] Global Forest Coalition & Brighter Green (2015). Meat from a Landscape Under Threat: Testimonies of the Impacts of Unsustainable Livestock and Soybean Production in Paraguay, <http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/GFC-BG-Livestock-Landscape-Threat-web.pdf>

[6] IFAD Rural Poverty Portal, <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/statistics/tags/paraguay>

[7] FAO (2016). Livestock and the environment, <http://www.fao.org/livestock-environment/en/>

[8] CIFOR (2014). The context of deforestation and degradation of forests in Bolivia: Drivers, Agents and Institutions, Occasional Paper 108, http://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/OccPapers/OP-108.pdf p11

[9] Revista DBO (2015). Frigoríficos fechados: crise ou ajuste? <http://www.portaldbo.com.br/Revista-DBO/Destaques/Frigorificos-fechados-crise-ou-ajuste/13526>

Cattle ranching in Brazil. Jai Mansson/Flickr CC

