



The Future of EU Livestock
A RISE Event
Scotland House, Brussels, 13th September 2018

MEETING REPORT

This document gives a summary overview of the discussion and issues covered during this RISE event. For a more detailed overview of the RISE report on the Safe Operating Space for EU Livestock’, go to:

www.risefoundation.eu/publications

Janez Potocnik, the RISE Chairman, opened the event by introducing RISE before going on to explain why RISE were focusing on livestock and what we aimed to achieve with this report, namely that RISE wanted to find a way to move beyond the polarisation of the discussions on the future of livestock, and look for a way to overcome the hostilities which are holding us back from finding solutions. The hope, he explained, is that the livestock report can contribute to a responsible, open minded and balanced debate. The report investigates if it is possible to identify clear boundaries for EU livestock. If EU livestock has become out of balance, and therefore unsustainable, is there a way to determine what balanced and sustainable livestock production and consumption would look like? If we can determine what a balanced sector looked like, then policy makers can better develop a clear strategy for the supported transition.

This was followed by a video from the **Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Phil Hogan**. Mr Hogan highlighted the growing demand for livestock products globally, warned that any increase in production should not be to the detriment of the environment and emphasised investment in innovation, technology and knowledge sharing as key in managing this dichotomy.

Session 1- What is the Safe Operating Space for EU Livestock – Report launch

The first session of the morning was devoted to the latest RISE report ‘What is the Safe Operating Space for EU Livestock’. This was presented by the two report authors, Allan Buckwell and Elisabet Nadeu.

The questions and responses of the audience, and the responses of Allan Buckwell, Elisabet Nadeu, Janez Potocnik and Erik Mathijs (a contributor to the RISE report) are summarised here:

Overall there was high praise for the report from many respondents in the audience who commented that it was one of the first balanced reports to move the debate forward and saw the SOS as a particularly useful tool through which this could be done in a scientific way.

More specific questions on aspects of the report, and the responses:

-) That the grassland data held at MS level was not always accurate and much grassland listed as grassland was actually scrub land. *RISE responded that the data came from EUROSTAT and that they had determined sustainable stocking rates (for the purpose of the report) for permanent*

pastureland (pp) as 1LSU/ha and 0.5LSU/ha for pp, they had halved both rates for rough grazing areas.

-) Was carbon storage considered when calculating GHG targets? RISE responded that carbon storage can work both ways, we can temporarily store it in soils, or loose it from soils. A recent review paper by Tara Garnett and colleagues concluded that we cannot conclusively say that there is effective carbon sequestration in most grasslands – it is very dependent on climate, farming practices etc. and therefore to accurately calculate carbon sequestration, one would have to develop calculations at the local level. This was beyond the scope of this project and evidence does indicate that any sequestration would only have a limited impact on GHG abatement in the long term. For these reasons we did not include the carbon storage aspect in this report.
-) A question on what data was used for antibiotic use to justify that livestock’s use of antibiotics is double than that in humans. If one compares per animal or per kg to human use, the resulting ratio differs greatly, and the human use should also be addressed. *RISE responded that the report used the absolute amounts of antibiotic used for animals and for humans; use per kg was more usually a system of reporting by the industry.*
-) There was disagreement by one respondent on the term ‘overconsumption of livestock products whereby the report calls anything above the average MS National Dietary Recommendation as overconsumption. Rather, this is the minimum level and 5% over this level cannot be called overconsumption. *RISE responded that 5% is an average and many MSs are consuming as much as 20 to 30 % over their MS National Dietary recommendation. Aside from health, they are overconsuming for the environment. Over consumption of animal protein (i.e. eating more than you require to keep tissues in good functioning health) means that the rest is burnt for energy. And when you consider the resources required to produce that gram of livestock protein, and the associated waste, this is a grossly inefficient use of resources.*

Other questions and comments

-) There should be more focus on best practise implementation and dissemination, to reach farmers this has to be focused down on the very local level.
-) There is a great deal of confusion amongst the public as to what determines the overconsumption of livestock products, and what the impacts of this are on the environment climate and health. Information to the consumer needs to be science based and clearer.
-) Concern that if we focus on technology and innovation for efficiency, we will lose much of the agriculture which is best for the environment, i.e. those systems that are inherently inefficient, such a low density grazing and therefore the impact will actually be worse for the environment.
-) The report does not take into account indirect GHG from feed in its calculation and if it did so the order of reductions would be far greater.
-) Several the audience objected to what they felt was the singling out of the sector (livestock) and of Europe. Livestock should be viewed as part of the whole agricultural system and connected industries.
-) Had RISE considered Phosphorus as livestock farmers would face serious limitations if they had to be dependent on phosphorus available in Europe.
-) The report lacked an economic boundary and needs to consider the aspect of fair pricing.
-) That there are massive markets opening in China which, if it needs to have enough milk to reach its NDR for its population, would need to import 100 million more tonnes of milk, and this is at a time when Chinese production in reducing.

The authors responded the following:

Best practices and their dissemination and implementation are a crucial part of moving forward and the better design and use of FASs should be a priority. We need to have a serious debate as to what

a sustainable and viable livestock would look like so that farmers and producers are not the victim of the change. How the sector can remain viable through this change, and against these challenges is missing in the latest CAP proposals which are lacking in ambition.

RISE as a European agri-environment think tank has turned its focus for the last two years to livestock as it the part of the agricultural sector which is responsible for the highest percentage of overall land use, GHG emissions and nutrient leakages, and therefore it has an important role to play. But this does not mean that other sectors do not have similar or even larger challenges (for example aviation). All sectors are having to consider many of the same issues around the world and with this regard one could say that all sectors (including crop production) are being singled out, as is energy, plastic, transport etc. because all sectors are facing substantial changes. However, RISE is in full agreement that solutions to the challenges that livestock face will only be addressed holistically by looking at solutions across agriculture, transport etc.

With regard to trade, we should not massively overestimate our export opportunities in this story. Yes, China’s growing population will increase the livestock protein it needs, but many other areas such as India, are investing heavily in their own production capacity.

Low stocking grazed agriculture is already dependent on public support, and this is unlikely to change unless the consumer can be persuaded to pay for the associated environmental benefits of grazing permanent pasture.

This report is not in any way talking about the elimination of livestock, and there will likely remain considerable livestock production consumption and production in the future, but there will be difficult choices to make. If we want more efficient systems that are less leaky, we will move towards more efficient production systems, but this will undoubtedly raise issues regarding welfare, and this is one of the balances that will need to be considered when going forward. A lot more work needs to be done regarding the impacts of different production systems, in different regions and climates, and of different species to better understand the impact of our choices.

With regards to an economic boundary. Agriculture is a highly dynamic and innovative sector which has huge possibilities. There is huge geographical variation across Europe regards innovation and it is important to understand why this is, but an economic boundary for Europe would be very difficult. Rather you need to look how to support innovation across the board both in terms of technology and systems, but also in the way farmers come together to manage their structural innovation. A lower economic boundary is a consequence of societal choices and it is important to note that the outcome of a reduction in consumption does not necessarily indicate a reduction in the value of the sector and this brings us back to the farmers reward and Hogan should be given credit here for his work on UTPs. An economic boundary also indicates a boundary which determines the minimum number of people employed but in our market system it is up to individual businesses to decide how many people to employ based on their own evaluation of the economic opportunities.

Regarding the inclusion of the indirect GHG from the sector. The story is shocking enough. When the indirect emissions are also added, the needed contraction is even more alarming. The report is not about manifesting fear, there are many others out there that are doing this well, rather we want constructive engagement.

JP concluded that it is not the limitation of resources that will force us to change our habits, but rather the irrational and irresponsible use of those resources in our current consumption and production models and therefore if we want to address the global challenges we face today, we will

have to change dramatically our current consumption and production models. Financial capital is overvalued and over rewarded, human capital under rewarded and environmental capital has no reward. These are the price signals that are sent to the market and these are wrong. Food prices will need to be higher to take into consideration the externalities.

Session 2 - What is the future of the EU Livestock sector

Each of the panellists in this session were asked to identify what they thought agriculture would look like in 20 years’ time.

Ingrid ODEGARD, Junior Council member of the Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure and Consultant Food Chains at CE Delft. Ingrid presented a vision of the food sector whereby through pressure to reach COP21 targets, real change had happened in the food chain. She imagined a world where food was carbon foot printed, where innovation across the chain was stimulated, data shared, solutions collectively sought. Where most food is plant based, local and circular and where dieting 2050 is ensuring that we eat within our planetary boundaries and this is shared equally globally.

Jean Louis Peyraud, President of the Animal Task Force. Jean Louis referred to the RISE report as one of the first times he has seen a report that lays out both the positive and negative aspects of livestock production and whilst he didn’t agree with all the conclusions, he did agree on the challenges the sector faces and the need for innovation. However by the report focusing only on the livestock sector, it was working in a silo. The livestock sector needs to be studied as part of the whole agriculture sector which can provide solutions for the impact of the sector and vice versa. Only in this way can we see clearly the sector’s potential for circularity and the bio economy. This will be where the main solutions lie. He saw the carbon footprint as the sector’s major challenge going forward but said there is a clear underestimation of the margin of progress in the introduction of feed additives vis a vis the production of methane. A second challenge will be animal welfare and the demand for consumers to allow animals to be kept in conditions that express their natural behaviour. And thirdly, he mentioned AMR.

Henk Westhoek, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency. Henk highlighted the lack of representatives from the retail and food production sector in the audience. These actors, he argued, will have a key role to play in moving our sector to be more sustainable in the long term; for example, the Green Protein alliance in the NL which is working to get consumers to adopt a 50:50 plant protein: animal protein strategy. He urged those present to focus on the whole food system to see how we can overcome the challenges in synergy. A future agricultural sector will provide new employment and value options for farmers – through, for example, landscape management schemes, or increased labour for more welfare orientated livestock farms.

A summary of the discussion from the audience:

There has been a clear shift in discussion on this issue, from 5 years ago, from whether there were any challenges, to the acceptance of challenges and how to shift. Whilst the agriculture is traditionally highly innovative and adaptive, large investments and the risk of stranded assets will hold it back, unless policy support can step in to help. It is possible; a buyout scheme 15 years ago in the Netherlands led to a 15% reduction in the sector. It was taken up by many elderly farmers who were keen to reduce large debts and retire and opened many opportunities for younger farmers coming into the sector.

There was a general agreement that consumers are key in this debate and whilst the talk is often on how to shift the agricultural sector, there is very little discussion on how to shift consumers consumption patterns. Price will clearly play a role in this, as will retailers in the choice they provide to consumers, how they present portion size, product information and advertising. But the consumer is confused, much greater emphasis needs to be put in providing the consumer a clear understanding of the impacts of the food choices they make and ensuring that this information is science based. This will be value driven and more research data is needed on what concerns the consumer, such as animal welfare.

However, when we discuss the reduction in animal protein, we need to be careful to pay careful attention to the different needs of different sectors of the population (children, elderly, pregnant women) and those on a poor incomes who risk being priced out of access to high quality protein.

Perhaps the concept of a SOS would be a good start to move the CAP forward to a policy that uses public money for public goods. Direct payments support the private good and should be phased out to ensure the provision of public goods and the transition of the sector to a more sustainable system. The CAP should not protect the status quo but by a policy of transition.

If the report outlines the main innovations in the sector and highlights them as important, but then says they are enough, will this impact on investment in innovation in the sector.

An emission trading system to stimulate innovation?

Whilst the report considers innovation seriously and does not underestimate the potential of humans to innovate, we need to see serious scientific research that shows that there are innovative solutions and practises that will be sufficient to reduce the impacts of the sector to the SOS otherwise there will be no alternative than to push for a reduction in consumption (and thereby production).

Finally there was a question raised about where to go next. If the livestock sector is required to contract, what should it be replaced by and what should we do with the land that will become available. There are many possible solutions: revert to wilderness, biofuels, sustainable construction timber, or grow different types of food crops. Any discussion on a shift needs to include an economic analysis.