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CONTENTS

- Report from World Meat Congress
- The Deference Doctrine and What It Means for the U.S. Industry

Report from World Meat Congress

The Final Afternoon of the World Meat Congress focused on two vitally important areas for Meat Companies Worldwide:
1. Sustainability Issues and Meat's Carbon Footprint and
2. Global Animal Health Issues



Jason Clay is Vice President of the World Wildlife Fund. As well as being an academic, he comes from a family farming background. He spoke about the big challenges facing the industry on the carbon footprint of meat and although he had some blunt messages, he was keen to be constructive and point to practical solutions. He indicated that there was a problem with talking about **average** emissions' intensities for different protein food categories, illustrating this with his slide showing almost identical meals on two different plates – one of which accounted for 171 kgCo2 emissions and the second plate a mere 12 kgCo2!

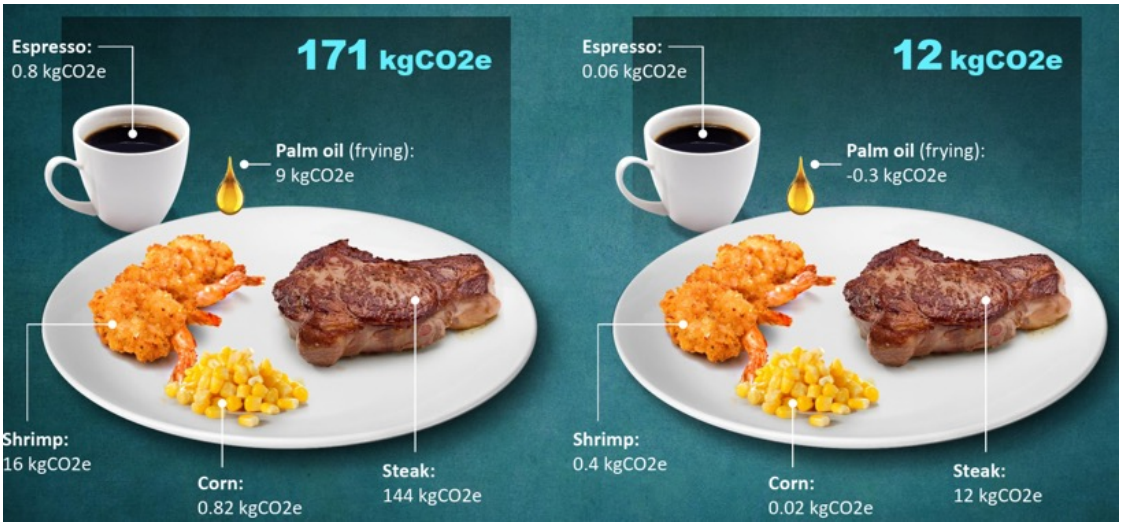
'Averages tell you the how many, not the who, where and why of GHG emissions' he said. Strategies to improve things could either be through *'rewarding the best'* or *'removing the rest'*. Importantly, the industry also ought to remember that climate change impacts, even in the next 10 to 15 years, will inevitably influence where and how they produce meat as well as the sourcing of animal feed.

Moreover, if we look beyond that to the second half of this century, climate activity will produce fundamental alterations in the global location of livestock and crop production, with dramatic changes for some areas of the world; for example, the US Midwest. In relation to livestock production, producers will need to face up to higher temperatures, major variations in water availability, changes in pasture and feed quality, as well as increased stress, disease and mortality rates.

'Adjustments in Mindsets' Needed

Turning to the action to be taken, Jason Clay emphasised that our mindsets needed to adjust from *'what to think'* to *'how to think'* and to have a goal of 50% reduction in GHGs by 2030 – focusing on Scope 3 emissions.

Figure 1. "Average emissions intensity" doesn't tell the whole story



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He showed the impressive reductions already achieved by the US beef industry in recent years and proceeded to spell out ways the global meat industry could succeed.

1. Focus on best practice, particularly on higher productivity; there should be a major shift to **best performance**.
2. Most food products, including meat, were marketed at low prices that did not reflect their true costs of production; it was necessary **to include the carbon costs in future meat pricing**.
3. There should be agreed standardised measurements of GHGs which should include realistic estimates of Scope 3 emissions.
4. The industry should initially focus on areas that provide opportunities for big impacts and link this to a continuous improvement culture with regular monitoring of progress.
5. Finally, companies should ensure they keep up to date with scientific and technological changes as well as any structural changes in the market; these could provide further significant scope for improvements and company strategies should grasp and incorporate such innovations.

Meat Industry Sometimes Slow to Embrace Climate Change Agenda

Ivan Ivanov is the Protein Advisory Lead in the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank. IFC is the largest global development institution focusing on the private sectors of developing countries. It currently has a portfolio of sixty-six investments around the world in animal protein, valued at $US1.1 billion.

Their investments in the livestock sector are required to be aligned with the principles set out in the agreement reached at the 2015 Paris UN Climate Change Conference and demonstrate a clear pathway towards reduced GHG emission and climate-resilient development. As an example, he quoted an IFC beef project in Zambia which sought to establish GHG emission baselines and build internal capacity to assess and identify decarbonization opportunities in their livestock and meat processing operations.

IFC aims to speed up the climate transition of the livestock sector in developing countries. He challenged the industry, however, saying that the livestock sector has sometimes been slow to embrace the climate change agenda. It should take more global initiatives - *'Decarbonization of livestock is a global challenge that needs local solutions'*. The dairy sector had shown the way with various collaborative pre-competitive initiatives.

Big Reductions in Carbon Emissions for Meat being Achieved!

Martijn Bouwknegt, Research Manager from VION Food Group, showed that the carbon footprint from both pork and beef from the dairy herd could be reduced and *'be comparable to various plant protein sources, including tofu'*. The key ways to achieve this were:

- Increasing efficiency in production systems – particularly lower feed conversion ratios
- Use of by-products from the food industry

Figure 2. Big steps have already been taken since 1990 in the Netherlands

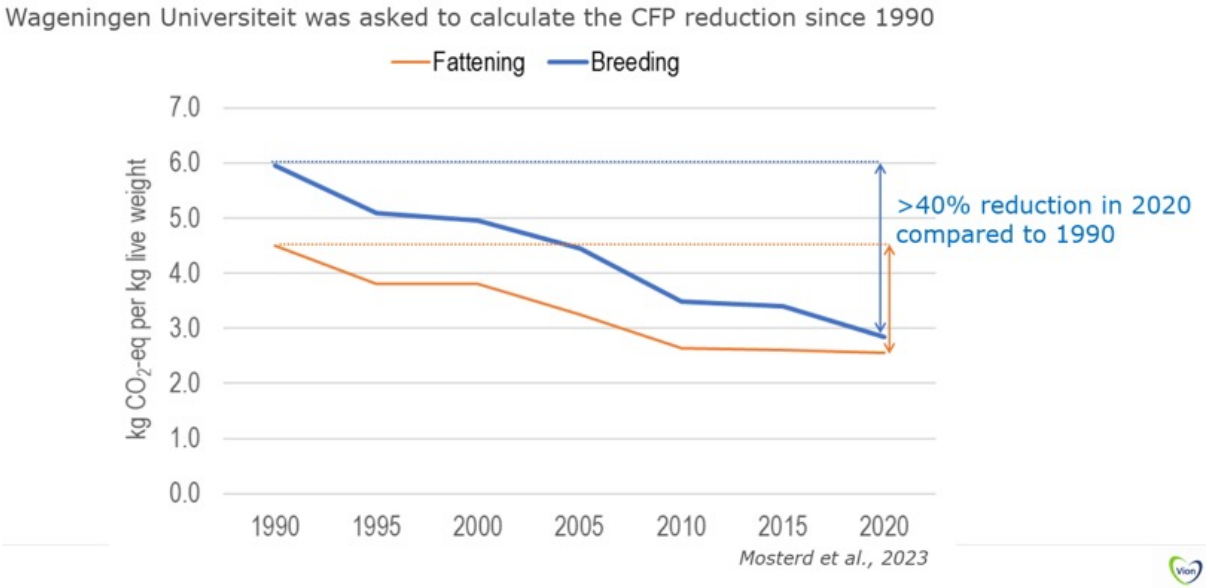
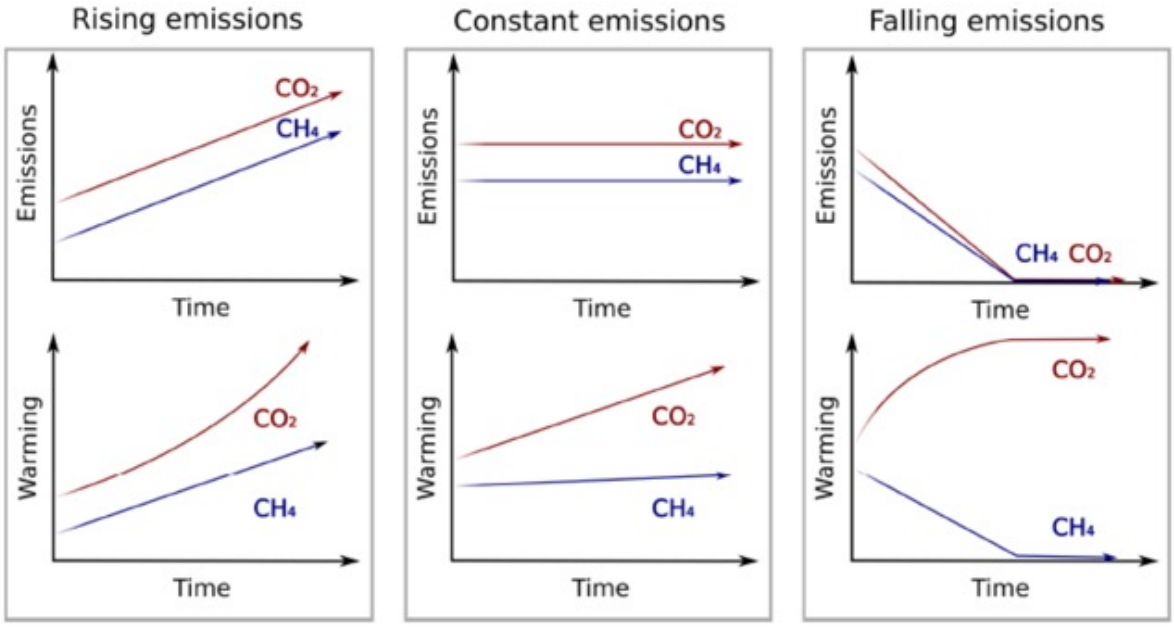


Figure 3. Emissions vs Warming - Using the Right Metric



- Manure storage and treatment

In his up-beat presentation, he gave examples from his Vion experience and concluded by saying that climate targets for 2030 were already within reach. High resolution in real data provided insight on management options for farmers but more informed communication to consumers was essential. The key message was that meat is not only a wholesome food item, but it ***can be produced very sustainably***.

Major Initiatives Occurring on Methane Reductions in New Zealand

The particular challenges faced by the New Zealand beef and sheep industries on reaching climate change and carbon emissions targets were highlighted in a forceful presentation by **Sam McIver, Chief Executive of Beef + Lamb New Zealand**. The red meat processing sector was New Zealand's largest industry and supported 92,000 jobs across both sides of farmgate; furthermore, New Zealand was the world's largest lamb exporter and the sixth largest for beef exports.

At the time of the Congress, there were uncertainties on future Government policies due to the fact that the final outcome of the general election was still awaited. He indicated, however, that the key challenges to be tackled were:

- The negative global narrative in relation to the ruminant meat sectors
- The unique issues related to methane emissions and the essential need for finding methane reduction technologies.
- The need to ensure that appropriate technologies were incorporated into livestock production systems.
- Implementation of effective on-farm measurement and management.

The approach being taken by Beef + Lamb New Zealand was to:

1. Remove some of the confusion over ***the differences between GHG calculations***. Since the 1990s, New Zealand sheep and beef farming had reduced its emissions by 30% and was on track to be carbon neutral by 2050 on the basis of the GWP100 calculation. However, although GWP100 was still the IPCC's basis for measuring global warming potential, recent research indicates that GWP* is a more accurate measure and this would place the New Zealand livestock situation in an even better position.
2. Make significant ***investments in R&D*** - particularly related to reducing methane emissions.
3. Ensure that ***farmers had the right tools*** at their disposal.
4. Change the negative narrative, in particular by making good use of ***science-based New Zealand-specific data***.
5. Look for novel approaches. An example of this had come from a recent Life Cycle Assessment study which found that ***New Zealand's on-farm footprint was almost half the average of other countries*** measured in the study. This was in part because the carbon being sequestered through native and woody vegetation on the New Zealand farms is maintained and not released.

Jenny Hutchison is Head of the World Animal Health

Information Analysis Department of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). She described the history of WOAH (formerly known as OIE) since its creation back in 1924. There were now 188 countries that were members and each of these were required to provide WOAH with *'whatever information was necessary to minimise the spread of important animal diseases and their pathogenic agents and to assist in achieving better worldwide control of these diseases'*.

Information flow takes place through the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) portal which provides: an **early warning system** for the immediate management of alert notices for emerging diseases; There is also a **monitoring system** to manage six-monthly information updates on all WOAH-listed diseases; and **further information** on a wide range of subjects.

Effective Tackling of Animal Diseases Important for Society as well as for Industry

The impact of animal-based diseases was vitally important for society as a whole as well as for the industries concerned. Quoting current statistics, at present 21% of global calorific supply comes from terrestrial animal source food; 1.3 billion people are employed in the livestock product value chain; 40% of agricultural production comes from livestock; 60% of human infectious diseases originate in animals; and large number of animals (over 28 million in the first 9 months of 2023) have to be culled to control animal disease outbreaks.

WOAH's Strategy Plan for Tackling ASF

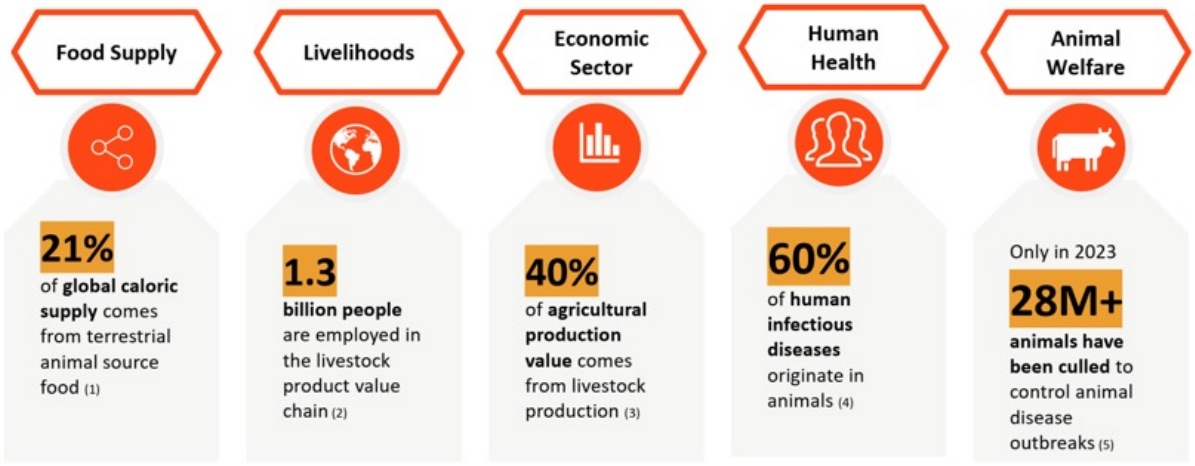
There had been significantly increased numbers of animal disease outbreaks since 2019 and, from the meat sector's point of view, African Swine Fever (ASF) and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) have been the major concern. Congress delegates were particularly interested in the ASF situation and Jenny dealt with the variety of ways that WOAH was helping countries: for example, they provided advice on how to introduce a compartmentalisation programme when ASF was spreading into new areas. WOAH was also in the middle of its 6-year (2020 – 2025) strategic plan for the control of ASF; the aim of this was to establish coordination and cooperation amongst different country and regional partners; also, to facilitate business continuity.

Dr Dietrich Rassow, Germany's Chief Veterinary Officer gave an insightful presentation on how Germany was tackling the ASF Challenge. He described the protection corridor concept designed to limit the number of wild boars crossing the border from Poland and the Czech Republic into Germany. There was also extensive monitoring and surveillance in vulnerable regions such as Brandenburg, Saxony and Mechlenburg-Western Pomerania; in addition, they were also working alongside hunting teams in wild boar areas and searching for carcases with drones as well as on the ground with dog teams.

Big Impact of ASF on the German Pig Industry

Despite all these efforts, the ASF outbreak was having a major adverse impact on the German pig industry; not least because Germany is the second largest producer of pigmeat in the EU and also the second largest pork exporter after Spain. Numerous third countries have banned pork imports from Germany, although successful regionalisation agreements had been negotiated with Vietnam, Singapore, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, Barbados and South Korea.

Figure 4. Impact of Animal Diseases



In his concluding comments, Dr Rassow spoke about the challenges of negotiating regionalization agreements with importing countries, commenting: *'The option of regionalisation - envisaged at international level requires a significant amount of work and information for securing acceptance with trading partners'*.

An Appeal for Greater Free International Trade in Meat

A highlight of the Congress for many delegates was an impassioned speech given by **Fernando Mattos, Uruguay's Minister of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries**.

There were two main themes in his comments. First, the importance he attached to ***countries supporting and co-operating with each other*** in the current uncertain political climate. His other plea was for greater ***freedom in international trade***.

As a country, Uruguay, along with several other countries were heavily dependent on their meat export business but were encountering significant tariff and non-tariff barriers. More free trade in meat was not just important for Uruguay but in the economic interests of all countries. He advocated that all parties should resist the trend towards greater protectionism.

Famous Venue for Final Congress Dinner

In conclusion, the organisers should be congratulated on a successful Congress, bringing together delegates from a large number of countries. The closing Congress dinner took place in the impressive setting of the Chateau Neercanne on the outskirts of Maastricht. This was the venue where, in 1991, the then 13 EU Heads of Government had convened for lunch to celebrate their decision to pursue European Monetary Union and give birth to the Euro.

Bob Bansback
IMS Advisory Committee

The Deference Doctrine and What It Means for the U.S. Industry

Is de-regulation the U.S. industry's future?

The U.S. meat industry is one of the most heavily regulated industries in all of American commerce. Dating back to 1906, when the first comprehensive federal meat inspection program was instituted by Congress, the contemporary industry is regulated by dozens of government agencies, federal as well as state and local, from the inspection service to commerce regulators to livestock marketing agencies to inspectors who determine how big the lettering can be on a meat label. And that's just for meat products and their animal sources.

Additional agencies regulate employment, environmental impacts such as water and air quality, and trucks used to transport products. For decades, a major topic of analysis at virtually any convention of meat processors in the U.S. has been the burden of government regulation.

Yet there are rumblings that finally, this may be changing. A proposed wastewater discharge regulation that would apply to meat plants has met serious resistance in the U.S. Congress. Rep. Eric Burlison, a Republican from Missouri, and Rep. Ron Estes, a Republican from Kansas, have introduced the "Banning EPA's Encroachment on Facilities (BEEF) Act," which would prohibit the federal Environmental Protection Agency from finalizing, implementing, or enforcing the EPA's proposed rule titled "Clean Water Act Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards for the Meat and Poultry Products Point source category."

"Kansans have shared with me that this egregious burden by federal bureaucrats would shutter small operations in our communities due to the steep costs of implementing unnecessary, major phosphate and nitrogen testing that large-scale meat-processing operations can absorb and already conduct," stated Rep. Estes. "Together with Congressman Burlison, our common-sense bill would prevent the EPA from attacking local mom-and-pop meat producers with their regulatory overreach."

Changing the Basis

Congressional resistance to new federal regulations, especially from Republicans (who, traditionally, favor smaller government and less regulation), is nothing new. But

the proposed BEEF Act comes at a time when the entire basis for deferring to the expertise of government agencies for regulatory wisdom is under new review.

Back in 1984, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Chevron v. Natural Resources Defense Council*, ruled that courts should defer to an agency's reasonable interpretation of an ambiguous statute. The landmark decision set forth the legal test for when U.S. federal courts must defer to a government agency's interpretation of a law, statute, or regulation. The decision presented a new doctrine known as the "Chevron deference" -- a two-part test that is deferential to government agencies: first, whether Congress has spoken directly to the precise issue at question, and second, "whether the agency's answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute."

In plain language, this means that when Congress fails to act on an issue that may require regulation, federal courts must defer to the regulatory agency in decisions involving the regulation. In effect, the "Chevron deference" gives enormous power to regulatory agencies and thus to the Executive Branch of the federal government (i.e., the presidency), under which the agencies fall.

But in a case heard this term by the Supreme Court, the Chevron doctrine has been seriously challenged, and with the Court's current conservative bent, many observers believe the doctrine could be seriously weakened or even abolished.

The case involves a rule issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service requiring the herring industry to bear the costs of observers on fishing boats. In decisions in a suit brought by the herring fishing industry, both the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit upheld the rule, citing the deference doctrine.

But in a hearing last month before the Supreme Court, the industry asked the Court not only to review the need for the rule but also to overrule the earlier *Chevron* decision. An attorney for a group of fishing vessels told the justices that the *Chevron* doctrine undermines the duty of courts to say what the law is and violates the federal law governing administrative agencies, which similarly requires courts to undertake a fresh review of legal questions. The Court is expected to announce its decision later this summer.

"Greatly Flawed"

It is in this legal and political environment that the BEEF Act was proposed. Supporters of the bill include the American Association of Meat Processors (AAMP), Missouri Farm Bureau, Missouri Association of Meat Processors, and the Kansas Meat Processors Association, all of which represent small-volume meat processors.

"I want to be clear that AAMP believes we as an industry need to be environmentally responsible, but the proposed rule in its current state is greatly flawed," said Chris Young, executive director for AAMP. "The proposed rule is based on limited wastewater collection and limited visits to meat and poultry facilities and is based largely on a study performed by one of the activist groups that sued EPA.

EPA quotes the study more than 20 times in the proposed rule, a study that has not been peer-reviewed. EPA needs to start over and do its due diligence in collecting data and work with the industry to understand its diversity and how we can work together to come up with cost effective sustainable answers to wastewater issues." In other words, AAMP doesn't accept the EPA's expertise that created the wastewater rule. If the Supreme Court, in the herring case, tosses out the Chevron deference, AAMP's perspective on the wastewater rule will carry much more weight.

It is highly unlikely that even if the Supreme Court abolishes the Chevron deference and the BEEF Act passes and is signed into law, that U.S. meat companies suddenly will be out from under the many, many federal, state, and local regulations under which they must operate. However, going forward, if deference is returned to Congress or even the industry itself, it is possible that the U.S. meat industry in the future will be regulated much differently than it is today.

Steve Bjerklie, Contributing Editor, *Meat & Poultry* Magazine; correspondent, *The Economist*