**Consequences of increased global meat consumption on the global environment -- trade in virtual water, energy & nutrients**

By : Cassandra Brooks 

Meat production is projected to double by 2020 due to increased per capita global consumption of meat and population growth. Most of this increase in production will come through industrialized animal production systems. These trends will have major consequences on the global environment. While the global meat industry provides food and a livelihood for billions of people, it also has significant environmental and health consequences for the planet.

The growth of the meat industry mirrors the rise in global population, but increasing gross domestic product per capita in developing countries boosts the demand even higher. Generally, in developing countries when people have more money, they increase the meat and animal products in their diets, he noted. To meet the rising global demand for cheap protein, livestock production has grown increasingly more industrialized.

The meat industry also has a significant impact on global warming. Livestock production accounts for 18 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, including 9 percent of carbon dioxide and 37 percent of methane gas emissions worldwide, according to the Livestock, Environment and Development (LEAD) Initiative, an international consortium of government and private agencies based at FAO headquarters in Rome.

Calculating the true cost of meat production is a daunting task. Consider the piece of ham on your breakfast plate, and where it came from before landing on your grocery store shelf. First, take into account the amount of land used to rear the pig. Then factor in all of the land, water and fertilizer used to grow the grain to feed the pig and the associated pollution that results. Finally, consider that while a small percentage of the ham may have come from Denmark, where there are twice as many pigs as people, the grain to feed the animal was likely grown in Brazil, where rainforests are constantly being cleared to grow more soybeans, a major source of pig feed.

So , One solution is for countries to adopt policies that provide incentives for better management practices that focus on land conservation and more efficient water and fertilizer use, Mooney said. So much of the problem comes down to the individual consumer **; one** solution could be to get people in developed countries to eat less meat and to consider how and where the meat that they do eat is produced. I deem if they are informed that they do have choices **to help build** a more sustainable and equitable world, they can make better choices."