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Institute for Feed Education & Research

Global Feed LCA Institute – What's Happening Now?

Several special interest groups are calling on consumers and policymakers to cut meat, specifically beef, from their diets due to non-scientific studies that claim consuming animal protein has a negative impact on the environment. One of these misleading studies, by the World Health Organization, states that the production of poultry and livestock contributes up to 70 percent of the total U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. To counter misinformation with scientifically backed data, the Institute for Feed Education & Research funds organizations that are researching and developing common methods for assessing the livestock supply chain's impact across the world.

One of those initiatives is born out of the work by the Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance (LEAP) partnership, which the American Feed Industry Association is a member. Established in 2012 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the partnership has been working on developing a common methodology by which feed manufacturers and others involved in the agricultural supply chain around the world could assess their environmental performance and sustainability actions. In 2015, the partnership released methodology guidelines for the poultry and livestock industry to use to assess their GHG emissions regionally and globally. The LEAP standards are now regarded as the global scientific, consistent assessment standard for assessing the livestock and poultry production's emissions output in comparison to other industries.

In 2016, AFIA, in partnership with the European Feed Manufacturers' Federation, the Animal Nutrition Association of Canada, and the International Feed Industry Federation, launched the Global Feed LCA Institute (GFLI) to provide a more practical approach to the LEAP methodology. GFLI is working to develop a feed-specific, life-cycle analysis database and tool for international companies and associations to use to reduce their environmental impact and adopt more sustainable practices.

This work, which would not have been possible without continued financial support from those such as IFEEDER, is essential to supporting AFIA's efforts of providing scientific expertise to policymakers. For instance, thanks to the LEAP methodology and data gathered by the Environmental Protection Agency, we now know that the U.S. poultry and livestock industry has one of the lowest carbon footprints in the world, accounting for 3.8 percent of the United States' total GHG emissions, compared to the transportation sector, which stands at roughly 27 percent of the country's total emissions. AFIA has been able to use this scientifically sound data to correct misinformation from non-scientific studies and share this information with the White House and U.S. Department of Agriculture for consideration in policymaking.

The GFLI is also currently working to develop regional-specific feed ingredient databases, which helps to keep track of current GHG emission data and establish benchmarks, which is essential for business leaders to use to develop targets for reducing their regional and species-specific environmental impact in the future. AFIA is also working closely with the U.S. animal protein species groups to incorporate the new database values in their individual species models. GFLI aims to release its United States and Canada database and model to the public in early 2018.

AFIA would like to recognize several industry partners who are collaborating in the development of the GFLI U.S./Canada LCA feed ingredient database, including:

ADM Animal Nutrition, Inc.
Alltech, Inc.
Animal Nutrition Association of Canada
Cargill Animal Nutrition
CHS, Inc.
Diamond V
Evonik Corporation
Elanco Animal Health
Hi-Pro Feeds
Land O' Lakes Purina Animal Nutrition
The Mosaic Company
United Soybean Board
Novus International, Inc.
PotashCorp

The North American GFLI project is being coordinated and developed by Frank Mitloehner, Ph.D., U.C. Davis. Mithloehner has also played a key role as part of the LEAP partnership.

Coming Soon...

IFEEDER's first ever annual report will be published later this summer, which will include highlights from 2016 and a look ahead to upcoming projects for 2017. A list of funders and a financial snapshot of the foundation will also be included.

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