365 Building bridges for sustainable livestock: The 10-year+ learnings from the Global Farm Platform

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Abstract: The Global Farm Platform initiative (www.globalfarmplatform.org), established in 2014, is a network of research farms and institute members working collaboratively to enhance the sustainability of ruminant livestock systems through the development of transformational regional solutions to global challenges and promote their adoption. This multidisciplinary international network provides a unique combination of research and practice for diverse ruminant production systems in various cultural, socioeconomic, and climatic zones. Our steps for sustainable livestock include: 1) Feeding animals less human food, focusing on forage-based systems and reducing reliance on supplementary feeds; several research farms (RFs) are exploring sustainable practices, such as the Kenian "Tumbukiza" method and increased plant diversity in grazing systems, to enhance resilience and productivity. 2) Raising regionally appropriate animals adapted to local conditions; RFs are engaged in crossbreeding and selecting animals for resilience to climate change challenges, ensuring they can thrive in specific environments. 3) Keeping animals healthy; RFs employ various approaches, including technology like sensors and video cameras for monitoring animal health, as well as vaccine development to combat specific diseases. 4) Smart supplements; RFs explore options like spontaneous vegetation and innovative legumes to enrich soil quality and provide nutrition. 5) Focusing on quality over quantity in food production; RFs are implementing measures such as CT scanning for carcass confirmation and assessing the nutritional value and carbon footprint of forage-based beef systems. 6) Tailoring practices to local culture; promoting the transfer of research outcomes to stakeholders and farming communities. This includes initiatives to transform agriculture for environmental and economic benefits. 7) Tracking costs and benefits; involves assessing the environmental and economic impacts of sustainable grazing systems, utilising Life Cycle Assessment approaches, and collating databases for comprehensive analysis. 8) Studying best practices; involves the Global Farm Platform initiative's network of research farms globally. The initiative aims to optimise livestock use in various regions, considering local resources, breeds, and feedstuffs.

Keywords: global farm platform, life cycle assessment, research platforms, sustainable ruminant livestock