



One More Way to Fight Global Warming

Scientists are on a mission to fight global warming by making livestock less gassy because livestock is responsible for about 14.5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

- Cattle, buffalo, sheep and goats produce nitrous oxide, carbon dioxide and methane, which are released through belching.
- Although less prevalent than carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, methane is more potent because it traps 28 times more heat.

Current Developments

- Scientists are working on ways to reduce the emissions, including by breeding animals that burp less, adjusting their diets so they produce less methane and planting trees in pastures.
- New Zealand's AgResearch has bred sheep to produce 10 percent less methane; the low-methane sheep are leaner and also grow more wool.
- Some companies are working on a type of probiotic - helpful bacteria or yeasts in the digestive system - which has shown a 50 percent reduction of methane emissions in cattle during research.
- Latin American large farm holders' are experimenting with silvopastoralism - planting trees in pastures where they absorb greenhouse gases and offset emissions, while restoring degraded soil and improving biodiversity.

Indian Scenario

- In India, a national program to boost the milk production of cows and buffalos by improving their diet is also helping the environment.
- The National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) uses software to assess the ideal diet for an animal, based on its physical profile and environment.
- The tailored diet means that each animal produces 12 to 15 percent less methane.
- Over the past five years, the program has reached about 2.6 million of the nearly 300 million cows and buffalos recorded in India's 2014 livestock census.