

ECOLOGIC

Animal welfare at heart of sustainability

Livestock production has an impact on the environment including greenhouse gases that are emitted and use of resources

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Livestock freely wanders our urban streets and are further victims of human cruelty since they are part of our currently unsustainable food-chain. A terrifying video involving two medical college students gleefully hurling a hapless screaming puppy from the terrace of a multi-storied building went viral this week. Many of us were enraged and spoke out in one voice for creatures with no 'rights'.

The entire campaign is aimed at showing the way to the general public to act individually against cruelty to animals instead of relying on NGOs for action. The only reference to proper treatment of animals is under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)-11 which at its best is a weak and outdated law. We need to do better and tighten this antiquated law of the 1860. This incident prompted me to ask — how does the fair treatment of animals encompass the ambit of sustainable living? The answer may not



Livestock management is critical for sustainable growth

be obvious at first; but deep contemplation shows that our environment is inextricably linked to all creatures.

Animal welfare is at the very heart of sustainability, and reflects societal tolerance to inequi-

ty and violence. Rainforests are continuously cleared for farming and rearing animals, while its wildlife are hunted, poisoned or electrocuted when they prey on livestock or raid crops. Where is the justice in this? There is an un-

deniable link between animal production with animal welfare, and other ethical, political, economic, environmental and social issues. How we harvest and consume food is not a private issue anymore.

Production and consumption

of items from animal origins need extra monitoring to ensure that they are in fact ethically and culturally sustainable. Livestock production has a direct impact on the environment in several ways, such as the amount of greenhouse gases that are emitted, the use of potable water for maintenance of livestock and the land resources they take up. At the same time, we have to acknowledge that animal husbandry contributes to rural livelihood, general health and nutrition. However, the treatment of livestock needs to be humane.

We have to consider many interconnected causes to understand their effects on global population of living beings, vegetation and the environment. In fact, most staunch advocates of sustainability in the world today argue that switching to a plant-based diet is the way of the future. Each day, a person who eats a vegan diet saves 4,150 litres of water, 20 kg of grain, 30 sq ft of forest land, 9 kg of carbon dioxide from emission, and one animal's life. Animal welfare

is therefore a societal concern and an important constituent of the sustainability agenda.

Our actions and activities as individuals affect holistic sustainability — being compassionate towards animals and abjuring from mindless violence on them has lasting all round impact. With increasing awareness against animal testing, we save thousands of lives from incarceration, abuse and most times painful and slow death. With new technology, animal testing across industries can easily be banned as we discover eco-friendly and cruelty-free alternatives for research and development in laboratories that test new products, medicines and technologies.

Adopting a sustainable lifestyle means maintaining a balance, one in which we do not harm our earth or any of the living creatures on it. Be compassionate, be sustainable!

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