



Prof. Dr. Ir. Imke de Boer

professor Live Stock & Sustainable Food Systems at Wageningen University & Research

Title presentation

Livestock and Sustainable Food Systems

Personal info

Prof. Imke de Boer is professor Livestock & Sustainable Food Systems at the Animal Production Systems group of Wageningen University & Research. She is a leading expert in analysing and designing healthy and circular food systems, with a special emphasis on the role of livestock.



Abstract

Livestock are at the heart of international discussions on sustainable food systems. The global livestock sector is associated with land-use change, soil degradation, water depletion, feed-food competition, climate change, and the pollution of waters and soils. Livestock raised under the circularity concept, however, can also provide a significant amount of valuable food, including highly bioavailable macro- and micronutrients for humans. While grazing, ruminants moreover can contribute to maintaining the landscape, and, in specific situations, to for example flood prevention, biodiversity conservation or carbon sequestration.

Other aspects, such as animal welfare, human health risks, ethics or people's livelihoods, also should be considered when exploring the role of livestock in healthy and circular food systems. Here I will highlight the complexity of defining the role of livestock in sustainable food systems. I will also demonstrate that defining this role ultimately involves normative judgements, as it depends on the sustainability issues under consideration and their inherent trade-offs (e.g. mitigating climate change, landscape or biodiversity conservation, food security, animal welfare, ethics), local cultural and socio-economic circumstances and values.