The Carbon Hoofprint: How Livestock Impacts on Climate Change

Shubham Mandhale[1]*, Piyush Bhole[1], Rohit Rathod[1], Nitin Phate[1], Rajeshwar Khandare[2] and J. P. Korde

[1]*Nagpur Veterinary College, MAFSU, Nagpur*
[2]*College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Deoli*

Corresponding Author
Shubham Mandhale
Email: mandhaleshubham97@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Reducing carbon emissions in animal agriculture requires innovative strategies. Utilizing pre-digested feed or feed additives like tannins and saponins enhances nutrient absorption, inhibits methane production, and optimizes feed efficiency. Feeding animals mango leaves, rich in methane-inhibiting compounds, offers a sustainable, locally available feed source, potentially reducing enteric fermentation emissions. Incorporating oil into animal diets increases energy density, improves digestibility, and inhibits methane production, promoting balanced nutrition and sustainable resource use. Feeding concentrates ensures optimal nutrient utilization, reduces enteric fermentation, and improves feed conversion efficiency. These approaches offer multifaceted solutions to mitigate carbon emissions in animal agriculture, advancing sustainability and environmental stewardship.

INTRODUCTION

Animal agriculture is a significant contributor to carbon emissions, primarily through the production of methane (CH4) and nitrous oxide (N2O), potent greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming and climate change (Casey *et al*., 2006). Ruminant animals such as cattle, sheep, and goats produce methane during digestion through enteric fermentation, while manure management and fertilizer use

contribute to nitrous oxide emissions. These emissions not only exacerbate climate change but also lead to air and water pollution, habitat destruction, and resource depletion, posing significant environmental challenges.

Addressing carbon emissions from animal agriculture requires innovative and sustainable approaches to mitigate its impact on the environment. Among these strategies, utilizing pre-digested feed or feed additives, feeding animals mango leaves, incorporating concentrates into animal diets, and supplementing feed with oil offer promising avenues for reducing carbon emissions while ensuring animal health and welfare. These approaches leverage scientific principles such as enhanced digestibility, methane inhibition, and optimized nutrient utilization to improve feed efficiency and minimize environmental impact.

In this context, this paper explores the potential of pre-digested feed, mango leaves, concentrates, and oil supplementation as strategies to reduce carbon emissions in animal agriculture. By examining the scientific mechanisms and practical implications of these approaches, this study aims to contribute to the development of sustainable farming practices that promote environmental stewardship and mitigate the adverse effects of animal agriculture on the planet.

Impact of Livestock on Climate Change

1. **Cattle (especially beef cattle):** Cattle, particularly beef cattle, are significant contributors to carbon emissions due to enteric fermentation in their digestive systems, which produces methane. Additionally, deforestation for cattle farming and feed production further amplifies their environmental impact.

2. **Sheep and Goats:** Like cattle, sheep and goats are ruminant animals that produce methane during digestion, contributing to carbon emissions. Their farming practices, such as grazing and deforestation for pastureland, also contribute to environmental degradation.

3. **Buffaloes:** Similar to cattle, buffaloes are ruminant animals that produce methane through enteric fermentation. They are commonly raised for meat and dairy production in various parts of the world.

4. **Pigs:** While pigs do not produce methane to the same extent as ruminant animals, their manure management and intensive farming practices can still contribute to carbon emissions, particularly through the release of methane and nitrous oxide from manure.

5. **Poultry (chickens and turkeys):** Poultry farming, especially intensive production systems, can contribute to carbon emissions through feed production, transportation, and manure management. While they produce less methane compared to ruminant animals, their large-scale farming practices can still have environmental consequences.

Effect of carbon emissions on environment

1. **Contribution to Climate Change:** Animal agriculture is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, particularly methane and nitrous oxide, which are potent greenhouse gases. These emissions trap heat in the atmosphere, leading to global warming and climate change.

2. **Air Pollution:** Methane and other pollutants released from animal waste and manure management can degrade air quality, contributing to respiratory issues and other health problems in both humans and animals (Abdalla *et al*., 2006)

3. **Water Pollution:** Runoff from animal farms can contaminate nearby water

sources with pollutants such as nitrogen and phosphorus, leading to algal blooms, oxygen depletion, and harm to aquatic ecosystems.

4. **Deforestation and Habitat Destruction:** The expansion of animal agriculture often involves clearing forests and natural habitats to create pastureland and grow feed crops. This deforestation contributes to habitat loss, biodiversity decline, and the release of stored carbon into the atmosphere.

5. **Resource Depletion:** Animal agriculture requires vast amounts of land, water, and feed resources, leading to deforestation, water scarcity, and competition for food crops that could otherwise be used to feed humans directly.

Overall, carbon emissions from animals contribute to various environmental problems, including climate change, air and water pollution, habitat destruction, and resource depletion, all of which can have detrimental effects on ecosystems, human health, and the planet as a whole.

How to reduce this carbon emission from animals

1) Pre-Digested Feed

Using pre-digested feed or feed additives to reduce carbon emissions from animals is an area of ongoing research and innovation in animal agriculture. Here are some ways in which pre-digested feed or feed additives could potentially help reduce carbon emissions:

1. **Improved Digestibility:** Pre-digested feed or feed additives can enhance the digestibility of nutrients in animal feed, allowing animals to extract more energy and nutrients from their food. This can result in reduced methane emissions per unit of feed consumed, as less undigested material remains in the gut to undergo fermentation.

2. **Methane Inhibitors:** Some feed additives are designed to inhibit methane production in the digestive system of animals. These additives can include compounds such as garlic, seaweed, or specific types of microbes that interfere with the methane-producing bacteria in the gut, thereby reducing methane emissions.

3. **Nutrient Balancing:** Pre-digested feed formulations can be optimized to provide animals with the precise balance of nutrients they need for growth and production. By ensuring that animals receive the nutrients they require without excesses or deficiencies, feed efficiency can be improved, leading to lower emissions per unit of product.

4. **Alternative Protein Sources:** Pre-digested feed formulations may incorporate alternative protein sources, such as insect meal or microbial proteins, which have lower carbon footprints compared to traditional feed ingredients like soybean meal or fishmeal. By reducing reliance on resource-intensive feed ingredients, overall carbon emissions associated with feed production can be decreased.

5. **Selective Breeding:** Through selective breeding programs, animals can be bred for traits such as improved feed efficiency and lower methane production per unit of feed consumed. By selecting animals with traits that contribute to lower emissions, such as a more efficient digestive system or a more balanced microbiome, it may be possible to reduce overall emissions from animal agriculture.

It's important to note that while pre-digested feed and feed additives show promise in

reducing carbon emissions from animal agriculture, further research is needed to fully understand their effectiveness, safety, and practicality on a large scale. Additionally, sustainable farming practices, such as rotational grazing, manure management, and agroforestry, should be integrated into overall farm management strategies to minimize environmental impacts.

2) Feeding animals mango leaves

Feeding animals mango leaves as part of their diet can potentially help reduce carbon emissions in several ways. Mango leaves are rich in compounds such as polyphenols and tannins, which have been shown to inhibit methane production in the digestive systems of ruminant animals like cattle and goats. By incorporating mango leaves into their diet, methane emissions from enteric fermentation may be reduced, contributing to lower overall carbon emissions from animal agriculture. Additionally, mango leaves can provide a sustainable and locally available feed source, reducing the need for resource-intensive feed ingredients and decreasing the carbon footprint associated with feed production and transportation. However, it's essential to ensure that mango leaves are properly processed and supplemented with other nutrients to meet the animals' nutritional requirements and avoid any adverse effects on animal health. Further research and experimentation are needed to fully understand the potential benefits and practical implementation of feeding mango leaves to animals for reducing carbon emissions.

3) Feeding of concentrate

Feeding concentrate in animal feed can reduce carbon emissions in animal agriculture due to several scientific reasons:

1. **Increased Feed Efficiency:** Concentrates are highly dense in energy and nutrients, allowing animals to meet their dietary requirements with less feed. This results in reduced overall feed intake, minimizing the carbon footprint associated with feed production, transportation, and storage (Kristiansen *et al*., 2021).

2. **Optimized Nutrient Utilization:** Concentrates are formulated to provide a balanced combination of proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals, ensuring animals receive optimal nutrition. This improves nutrient absorption and utilization by the animal's digestive system, reducing the amount of undigested material excreted as waste and lowering methane emissions from manure.

3. **Reduced Enteric Fermentation:** Concentrates are typically low in fiber and fermentable carbohydrates, which can decrease the production of methane during enteric fermentation in the rumen of ruminant animals. By feeding concentrates, the fermentation process is moderated, leading to lower methane emissions from the animal's digestive system.

4. **Balanced Diet Formulation:** Concentrates can be precisely formulated to meet the specific nutritional requirements of different animal species and production stages. This ensures that animals receive a balanced diet with the right mix of nutrients for optimal growth, health, and performance, reducing the need for supplemental feeds and minimizing associated carbon emissions.

5. **Improved Feed Conversion Efficiency:** Concentrates can improve feed conversion efficiency, meaning animals can convert feed into body mass more efficiently. This results in faster growth rates and higher productivity, requiring fewer resources overall and reducing the environmental impact of animal agriculture.

4) Feeding of oil

Feeding oil in animal feed can significantly reduce carbon emissions in animal agriculture

1. **Increased Energy Density:** Oils are highly concentrated sources of energy, containing more calories per gram than carbohydrates or proteins. By adding oil to animal feed, the overall energy density of the diet is increased, allowing animals to meet their energy requirements with less feed. This reduces the total amount of feed consumed by animals, thereby decreasing the carbon emissions associated with feed production, processing, and transportation.

2. **Enhanced Digestibility:** Oils can improve the digestibility of other nutrients in the feed, including carbohydrates, proteins, and fibers. The presence of dietary fats can stimulate the secretion of bile acids and enzymes in the digestive tract, facilitating the breakdown and absorption of nutrients. Improved digestibility means that more of the nutrients in the feed are utilized by the animal for growth and maintenance, reducing the amount of undigested material excreted as waste. This ultimately decreases the methane emissions associated with the decomposition of organic matter in manure.

3. **Methane Inhibition:** Certain types of oils, such as linseed or fish oil, contain fatty acids known to inhibit methane production in the rumen of ruminant animals. These fatty acids can disrupt the metabolism of methane-producing microbes, reducing the production and release of methane gas during digestion. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas with a high global warming potential, so inhibiting its production in the digestive system of animals can significantly mitigate carbon emissions from animal agriculture (Vargas *et al.*, 2020).

4. **Balanced Nutrition:** Oils provide essential fatty acids, such as omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, that are crucial for animal health and productivity. By supplementing animal feed with oils, farmers can ensure that animals receive a balanced diet with the necessary nutrients for optimal growth and performance. This balanced nutrition promotes overall health and reduces the need for additional supplements, minimizing the carbon emissions associated with their production and transportation.

5. **Sustainable Resource Utilization:** Oils can be sourced from renewable and sustainable sources, such as plant-based oils from crops like soybeans, canola, or sunflower, or from marine sources like fish oil. By utilizing oils from renewable sources, farmers can reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and non-renewable resources in animal feed production. This helps to lower the carbon footprint of feed production and contributes to the overall sustainability of animal agriculture.

CONCLUSION

In summary, feeding oil in animal feed offers multiple scientific mechanisms for reducing carbon emissions in animal agriculture, including increased energy density, enhanced digestibility, methane inhibition, balanced nutrition, and sustainable resource utilization. By leveraging these scientific principles, farmers can effectively mitigate the environmental impact of animal agriculture and contribute to a more sustainable food system.

Pre-digested, pre-fermented, oil, tannin saponin, mango leaves, feeding of concentrate.

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