Livestock operations have intensified over the last 25 years, with more animals being reared on fewer farms with smaller acreage. Thus, the advent of concentrated animal farming brought affordable meat and milk produce to more of the world’s population. However, this panacea has received increasing criticism from the general public that confining animals indoors or in high density feedlots is not only inhumane but could create greater environmental risks (i.e., degraded soil, water, and air quality). Thus, this book addresses several timely questions: Does animal welfare have a place in modern sustainable farming? Do the demands of an increasing human population mean that animal welfare should be put aside? Can we improve the way we raise animals and still feed the world—or is it a choice between ethics and economics?

This book attempts to make the case that to be truly sustainable, farming should include, not ignore, animal farming along with the production of healthy affordable food, and further, protect the environment. The book is edited by Marion Dawkins, a Professor of Animal Behavior at Oxford University, United Kingdom and Roland Bonney, Director of the Food Animal Initiative, as well as an arable, sheep, and cattle farmer in Wiltshire, United Kingdom. There are 13 contributors to the book who come from diverse backgrounds that include industry, animal welfare organizations, academia, and practicing farmers. The book has two sections “Voices for Change” and “Bringing about Change.”

In a current assessment of animal agriculture, the introductory chapter states that animal production occupies about 30% of the ice-free land for grazing and growing animal feed and accounts for 18% of all greenhouse gas emissions (as CO₂ equivalent). Animals are also reported to be responsible for 37% of methane, 65% of nitrous oxide, and 64% of ammonia emissions. In addition, animal farming can be said to have decreased biodiversity; for example, 70% of previously forested land in Latin America is now grazed for pasture. Clearly, there are some arguments for change. The four chapters in this section explain that even if animal welfare is ignored, change is needed because current farming practices are unsustainable. For example, will there be sufficient feed and water, while the threat of disease grows?

The second section “Bringing about Change” contains 12 chapters which (i) suggest that animal welfare is already an important part of the strategic planning of both small and global businesses, (ii) define what is meant by good welfare, and (iii) show how pioneering farmers can develop profitable enterprises. Remaining chapters discuss how animal welfare and production profitability has been improved, the adoption of these ideals by large corporations, and how legislation and farm inspections will become an important part of ensuring animal welfare.

Most chapters in the book follow a similar format, many of which conclude with a section describing the way forward. However, for readers wishing to get a detailed understanding of the role of animal agriculture on the environment or the impacts of animal welfare, they should read elsewhere. This book is an interesting read that basically promotes animal welfare. In as much, it will give readers a strong psychological and behavioral view of some aspects of the welfare of farmed animals. The famous quote from George Orwell’s book “Animal Farm” “All animals are created equal but some are more equal than others” is apparently still alive and well.

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