



Livestock Farming

Medium Risk Sector



Rearing of animals to produce meat, seafood, wool, furs and other products. For milk processing refer to the related 'Food and Beverage' sector.

Related Sectors:

- Crops and Gardening
- Fishing and Hunting
- Food and Beverage



Production Processes

Animals like chickens, pigs, sheep, cattle and goats are bred for their meat or their products such as eggs, milk or wool. Rearing includes the care and feeding of animals either on pasture land or by using processed fodder.

Crop plantation for fodder production, as well as pastures, requires large areas. Livestock-based farming generates large amounts of manure, which has to be collected, stored and then recycled or disposed of, possibly by spreading on land for fertilization.

Increasing demands for cheap animal products encourage farmers to apply methods of intensive livestock production, also called factory farming. Often chicken and pigs are reared in a high-density manner, which requires barns designed for that purpose and sophisticated animal health management. In animal farming the use of antibiotics and hormones is widespread. Some countries have special regulations concerning this issue. Pesticides are common in crop plantation for fodder production.

Aquaculture is a specific subsector and describes the cultivation of aquatic organisms, such as fish, shellfish, algae and other aquatic plants. Some examples of aquaculture include raising catfish or shrimp in fresh or saltwater ponds, growing cultured pearls, and farming salmon in net-pens set out in bays.

Sustainability Issues

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| L | Energy |
| M | Water Use |
| H | Emissions to Water |
| M | Waste |
| M | Emissions to Air |
| H | Ecosystems |
| L | Workplace Health & Safety |
| L | Disaster Risk |
| L | Site Contamination |

Sector Rating

- H High risk issue
- M Medium risk issue
- L Low risk issue

Risks & Opportunities

- **Liquid waste from livestock farming can lead to environmental pollution.**
Intensive livestock farming generates large amounts of fecal and urinary waste. In addition to nutrients, these may contain antibiotics, hormones and pesticides. From water pollution, conflicts with other uses, such as with fisheries and drinking water extraction, may result. Pesticides applied to animals must be handled carefully in order to mitigate risks for human health and the environment.
- **Large-scale farming may lead to deforestation and desertification.**
Large forest areas may have to be cleared for pastures. Grazing animals may prevent forest growth. Overgrazing, i.e. unsustainably large animal populations on too-small areas, may lead to desertification, which turns pasture to unproductive wasteland. Some of these impacts may be irreversible. Well-managed livestock farms ensure that their business is sustainable in the long run.
- **Intensive livestock farming may put a strain on the local water supply.**
Animal farming requires considerable amounts of fresh water for feeding and cleaning. A reliable and continuous supply of fresh water of high quality is essential. There may be potential for optimizing the efficiency of water use, for preventing shortages and for addressing conflicts with other users of the same water resources.
- **The use of pesticides/herbicides subject to international phaseouts or bans presents a risk to reputation.**
Bans and phaseouts indicate that substances present material risks to human health and the environment. Restricting the use of such substances may be essential if products are to be exported to markets overseas.