

Climate scientists have a beef with beef

By Geoffrey Mohan, Los Angeles Times

If you want to slow climate change, white meat may be the right meat, according to two studies that tally the environmental effect of the beef industry.

Raising cattle in the U.S. requires 28 times as much land and 11 times as much irrigation water, and pumps at least five times as much planet-warming gases into Earth's atmosphere than producing the equivalent calories of dairy products, poultry, pork or eggs, according to a study published online Monday in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

And from 1961 to 2010, worldwide emissions of planet-warming gases from livestock increased 51 percent, with the bulk of the increases coming from developing nations that are rapidly adopting the U.S. model of meat consumption, according to another study published Monday in the journal Climatic Change.

"For people, the obvious answer is: whenever possible, replace beef with something else," said Gidon Eshel, a geophysicist at Bard College and lead author of the study in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The beef industry, not surprisingly, is not impressed.

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