

1 Practical strategies to mitigate ruminant greenhouse gas emissions

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10 11 Abstract

12 Livestock contributes to 14.5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, with ruminants
13 being the largest contributor through enteric methane emissions. Although several mitigation
14 strategies are available to reduce livestock methane, no consensus exists on which methods are
15 the most effective. Here, the mitigation impact of the most pragmatic strategies to reduce
16 enteric methane has been projected to 2050, using cattle emissions as a model. The projection
17 shows that supplementing ruminant feed with anti-methanogenic seaweed and converting
18 grassland into silvopasture offer the greatest potential to reduce emissions. With a synergic
19 combination of strategies, the livestock sector in Europe and most of Asia can reach carbon
20 neutrality by 2035 and 2038, respectively. However, global cattle CO₂-eq emissions will be
21 reduced by no more than 34 percent by 2050, remaining far above the carbon neutrality target.

22 Mitigation strategies alone are insufficient to lower emissions, and reducing the demand for
23 ruminant products is also necessary – particularly in Africa and Western Asia.

24

25 **Main**

26 A key target to minimise the impact of the climate crisis on global ecosystems and human
27 economies is to reach carbon neutrality by 2050¹. For this, reductions to near-zero emissions of
28 carbon dioxide (CO₂) and non-CO₂ greenhouse gas (GHG) are necessary¹. The livestock sector,
29 which accounts for 14.5 percent of total anthropogenic emissions, generates methane – one of
30 the most potent GHGs and a significant driver of climate change^{2,3}. Archaea communities in the
31 rumen of cattle, sheep, goats, and other ruminants produce methane during enteric
32 fermentation, in an amount equivalent to 4.6 gigatonnes of CO₂ emissions annually^{2,4}. Livestock
33 husbandry additionally impacts natural resources during animal feed production, grassland use
34 and the life-cycle of animal products⁵⁻⁷.

35 With the human population projected to increase from its current 7.8 to 9.7 billion by 2050,
36 and the global demand for animal products expected to double over the same period,
37 reductions of livestock GHG emissions remain defiant to mitigation goals⁸⁻¹⁰. If GHG emission
38 rates continue their rapid growth, the current climate crisis will be exacerbated². Execution of
39 strategies to reduce GHG emissions is needed now to balance demands on food security and
40 environmental preservation^{7,11-13}.

41 Several GHG mitigation strategies are available for ruminant enteric methane, and their
42 feasibility varies with the geographical distribution of natural and economic resources^{2,7,11}.

43 Although some strategies are already in place, implementation of others lags behind despite

44 their strong data-backed mitigation potential¹⁴⁻¹⁶. This delay is due in part to the economic
45 inequality that impedes widespread research on ruminants. Such research requires long
46 experimental timescales and a holistic understanding of their implications on ruminant
47 subjects, the environment and human health.

48 Here, we use cattle to model ruminant CO₂-eq emissions and project the mitigation effect of
49 existing strategies to improve animal productivity and grassland-management. Among the
50 available mechanisms to reduce ruminant GHG emissions, we focus on replacing regular
51 animals with low-methane genotypes, grassland conversion to silvopasture, and methods to
52 inhibit methane production in the rumen. Our projection indicates that global suppression of
53 enteric methane emissions is not possible between by 2050, but mitigation can drastically
54 reduce emission intensity (Figure 1). The projection is based on historical data from 1990 to
55 2017 from global cattle stocks, enteric methane CO₂-equivalent (CO₂-eq) emissions, and CO₂
56 emission from ruminant grasslands by area. Data come from the Statistical Database of the
57 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAOSTAT), and exclude GHG
58 emissions from other livestock life-cycle steps.

59

60 **Breeding genetically advantageous ruminants**

61 Microbial communities ferment plant biomass in the rumen¹⁷. In this process, hydrogen and
62 CO₂ can be converted into nutrients by beneficial bacteria, or into methane by methanogenic
63 archaea¹⁸. Methane production uses 2-12 percent of the gross dietary energy and represents a
64 substantial metabolic lost to the ruminant^{19,20}. Some animals have genetic traits that can
65 reduce enteric methane emissions by favouring beneficial microbial communities²¹ or

66 increasing animal productivity per feed unit^{20,22}. Replacing regular with more efficient
67 ruminants (low-methane genotypes) is a strategy that benefits both the environment and the
68 ruminant economy^{19,20}.

69 Programs to gather ruminant genetic resources and promote selective breeding are already in
70 place worldwide, from single-country programs in Australia and Latin America to multinational
71 programs in Africa and Europe²³⁻²⁸. Nevertheless, ruminant breeding is a slow and expensive
72 process that can take decades before establishing a particular genotype²⁹⁻³². Moreover,
73 breeding must consider region-specific factors, as breeding developments suitable for one
74 region will likely not be implementable worldwide^{22,33}. Capital-intensive husbandry systems
75 have been successfully breeding beneficial genetic traits. For instance, in the Australian
76 Northern Territory, replacing foreign English Shorthorn cattle with a locally adapted breed
77 improved animal productivity, mitigating 43 percent of methane emission per tonne
78 liveweight^{30,34}. Similar capital-intensive breeding projects funded by national initiatives are in
79 place in other regions such as Europe and South America^{29,35-37}.

80 In labour-intensive and less economically successful systems, as are found in Eastern Africa,
81 ruminant breeds are selected for their adaptation to the environment (sparse grassland, heat,
82 local diseases) rather than for their productivity^{34,38-41}. While efforts have been made to
83 increase productivity by crossbreeding local with foreign breeds, most attempts lack scientific
84 rigour and ignore the limitations of the foreign animals to adapt in the new environments^{38,41,42}.
85 Community or farm-based breeding is a rapid alternative to centralised national or regional
86 breeding strategies, nevertheless few farms – often located in developed countries, can afford
87 comprehensive research facilities for selection of low-methane ruminants^{32,41,43,44}. Although

88 individual farms or independent funding sources (e.g. African Dairy Genetics Gain Program⁴⁵)
89 can finance local breeding, extensive ruminant replacement with efficient breeds requires long-
90 term commitments from governments⁴⁶.

91 Complex genetic interactions limit extrapolation from local breeding advances as a global
92 mitigation strategy of enteric methane emissions^{22,33,47}. For cattle, the available breeding
93 mitigation potential reduces only 11 percent methane per efficient animal²². Taking an
94 optimistic projection of current cattle breeding developments, we estimate that Europe,
95 Oceania and the Americas can successfully introduce locally selected breeds by 2030. Most of
96 Asia will reach this goal by 2035, and Western Asia and Africa by 2040 (Figure 2). As the
97 execution of such measures will take at least a decade, current research efforts to select low-
98 methane breeds could mitigate only 6.6 percent of global enteric methane emissions between
99 2020 and 2050 (Table 1 and Figure 2).

100

101 **Improving feeding practices**

102 Improvements in production practices and favouring quality feed can substantially reduce
103 GHG emissions from ruminant feed production^{6,48-53}. Ruminant diets range from free-grazing on
104 low-nutritional pasture to stall-feeding on horticulture produce of higher nutritional quality<sup>5,48-
105 50,54</sup>. The preference of one feeding practice over another depends on environmental and
106 economic feasibility and the physiological state of the animal⁵⁵. For instance, beef cattle
107 farming in temperate climates synchronises animal reproduction to pasture seasonality,
108 allowing calves to feed on grass; in contrast, intermediate and mature animals are fed on high-
109 quality fodder to gain weight before slaughter⁵⁵⁻⁵⁷.

110 Quality feed has a higher protein content and requires minimal fermentation, resulting in
111 higher animal productivity and lower intensity of methane emissions^{49,50,54}. Nevertheless,
112 ruminant feed production strongly impacts the environment, promoting degradation of natural
113 carbon sinks^{2,6,58}. A common practice to overcome feed production limitations is recycling
114 molasses, straws and grains otherwise discarded⁵⁹⁻⁶¹. However, such agricultural by-products
115 are highly fibrous, require longer fermentation and foment methane production^{54,59,61}. The
116 nutritional content can improve by degrading by-products cellulose before feeding ruminants;
117 however, this process increases feeding costs⁶²⁻⁶⁶.

118

119 **Conversion to silvopasture**

120 Adoption of more efficient land-use practices by converting pasture into silvopasture is
121 another strategy to overcome ruminant feed production limitations and mitigate GHG
122 emissions^{51,67,68}. Silvopasture introduces trees and shrubs within the pasture grassland,
123 securing quality feed all year round in tropical and subtropical latitudes^{53,67}. Leguminous, high-
124 quality grasses and other silvopastoral plants are rich in tannins and saponins – metabolites
125 that inhibit methanogenic populations in the rumen, improve nutrient absorption and reduce
126 methane emissions⁶⁹⁻⁷². Although these metabolites can induce toxicity from an overdose, *ad*
127 *libitum* foraging does not pose a risk of excessive dosing, as ruminants occasionally feed on
128 tannin-rich plants to reduce or prevent parasites^{70,73-76}. Finally, silvopasture provides additional
129 environmental benefits such as atmospheric CO₂ capture from increased plant biomass
130 production, soil recovery, water retention and increases in biodiversity^{51-53,67}.

131 The potential benefits of conversion to silvopasture vary among regions due to differences in
132 climate, humidity, and soil type (Supplementary Table 1). Tropical latitudes hold a potential
133 transformation of 45 to 85 percent of current ruminant grassland area, while 29 percent of the
134 global ruminant grassland could be converted into silvopasture. No conversion is effective in
135 arid regions in North Africa and the Middle East due to their climatic limitations. According to
136 our modelling of soil carbon stock changes using the FAO Ex-Ante Carbon-balance Tool (EX-
137 ACT), silvopasture systems can cut the GHG emissions related to ruminant grazing grassland
138 after the first year of conversion. Over a 30-year projection, silvopasture can capture globally
139 3.8 times more CO₂ -eq than grassland without conversion (Table 1).

140 Although silvopasture has a higher return rate and net value than pasture, conversion requires
141 a large capital investment with a payback period of around four years⁷⁷. Government support
142 and incentive payments can motivate farmers to adopt silvopasture systems^{68,78,79}. Silvopasture
143 establishment and maintenance cost US\$3,129 ha⁻¹ over 30 years but generates revenue of
144 US\$7,165 ha⁻¹ (United States estimation from 2012; includes property taxes, forage and timber
145 revenue)⁸⁰. Besides, successful silvopasture conversion reduces husbandry labour costs,
146 increases animal productivity by introducing high-protein plants and shade value, diversifies
147 farm income sources, and provides invaluable ecosystem benefits^{51,68,81}.

148

149 **Inhibition of methanogenic communities in the rumen**

150 Removal of methanogenic communities in the rumen using antibiotics has been a common
151 strategy to reduce enteric methane emissions⁵⁴. However, this strategy is falling out of favour
152 due to significant concerns over antibiotic resistance, antibiotic contamination in the

153 environment, and the potential transfer of bioaccumulated compounds from animal products
154 to humans^{54,70,82-85}. Legislations worldwide ban antibiotics of importance for human health to
155 promote animal growth, restricting their use exclusively for veterinary purposes^{70,86-94}. In the
156 search for alternatives to inhibit enteric methanogens, vaccines could trigger ruminant immune
157 responses against certain strains of methanogens⁹⁵⁻¹⁰⁰. Since the core microbiome is inheritable
158 and methanogens seem highly conserved across ruminants, vaccines targeting dominant
159 methanogens could facilitate broad immunisation and potentially reduce enteric methane
160 emissions^{21,101-103}.

161 Methanogens attached to the cilia of enteric protozoa can be indirectly removed if protozoa
162 are removed from the rumen¹⁰⁴. Although protozoa removal can reduce up to 42 percent of
163 methane emissions in cattle¹⁰⁵, defaunation also disturbs beneficial microorganisms, impairing
164 digestion and animal performance¹⁰⁶⁻¹¹⁰. Despite being among the oldest proposed enteric
165 methane mitigation strategies, defaunation requires complex experimental procedures (i.e.
166 isolation of newborns, or fistulating adults) and no practical and sustainable method is
167 available^{104,107,108,111}.

168 Other strategies focus on inhibiting methane production rather than eliminating the
169 methanogens. Examples include probiotics, digestibility enhancers and chemical or natural
170 supplements that alter methanogenesis^{18,66,70,87}. Probiotics are a promising method for
171 methane reduction where beneficial fungi and bacteria compete against methanogens for
172 hydrogen sources to form propionate^{18,112}. Contrary to methane released to the environment,
173 propionate is metabolised, favouring gluconeogenesis and increasing animal production^{18,113,114}.

174 Available studies analysing the effect of probiotics on enteric methane production show
175 contradictory results, and further research on probiotic strains is needed^{63,112,115-117}.
176 Plant oils are natural additives that facilitate digestion, inhibit feed protein degradation,
177 reduce enteric microbial populations, and dehydrogenate ruminal fermentation
178 pathways^{54,70,74,118-121}. The capacity for enteric methane reduction depends on the type of plant
179 oil, the ratio of oil to feed, the diet, and the animal species^{54,74,119,122}. For instance, seven
180 percent of coconut oil added to a diet of hay and concentrate reduces up to 63 percent of
181 sheep methane emissions^{74,123}. Practical methane reductions by plant oil additives range
182 between 10-32 percent, as higher oil proportions affect feed intake, digestibility and animal
183 productivity^{65,74,119,124}. However, the extraction of plant oils is expensive, and other additives
184 can offer similar methane mitigation levels for a lower cost^{70,74}.

185 Widely used chemical additives (urea, nitrate, sulfate, halogenated compounds) can act as
186 high-potential electron acceptors, redirecting hydrogen to propionic fermentation and
187 disrupting methanogenesis^{54,114,125-128}. Halogenated compounds have strong anti-methanogenic
188 potential. Bromochloromethane (BCM) used as a feed additive interferes with cobalamin
189 (vitamin B12) – a hydrogen donor, disrupting with methane production¹²⁹. BMC exhibits low
190 toxicity risk, no bioaccumulation in animal tissue, and reduced up to 91 percent of ruminant
191 methane production^{125,128,130-132}. However, the Montreal Protocol restricts industrial production
192 of BCM due to a significant ozone-depletion potential¹³³.

193 Naturally occurring halogenated compounds present a lower environmental risk to reduce
194 rumen emissions¹³⁰. Plankton and seaweed produce BMC and bromoform to protect against
195 predators and harmful hydrogen peroxides in the cells^{134,135}. Bromoform does not

196 bioaccumulate in the food chain and is not classifiable as a human carcinogen¹³⁶⁻¹³⁸. It has been
197 shown, for example, that after two years of daily gavage ingestion (<200 mg/kg), bromoform
198 displayed little carcinogenicity in rats (0.5-4%; n=50)¹³⁹. Supplementing ruminant feed with
199 bromoform-rich seaweed inhibits methanogen growth, consequently promoting propionate
200 production¹⁴⁰. Seaweed of the genus *Asparagopsis* added in 0.2 to 3 percent to a grass diet can
201 reduce methane emissions up to 98 percent in cattle and sheep^{55,141,142}. The use of bromoform-
202 rich seaweed as an anti-methanogenic strategy also increases animal productivity in weight
203 gain without affecting animal health or meat quality¹⁴¹. *Asparagopsis* is traditionally used in the
204 Hawaiian cuisine without affecting human health¹⁴³.

205 Before slaughter, intermediate and mature cattle feed on high-quality fodder supplemented
206 with nutrients to increase final animal product⁵⁶. Based on an average lifespan of 420 days for
207 beef cattle⁵⁶, we estimate that 11 kg of anti-methanogenic *Asparagopsis* can be supplemented
208 on fodder during 36 percent of the animal lifespan (see Methods). Considering a mitigation
209 effect of 98 percent reduction of enteric methane per animal¹⁴¹, seaweed at 2 percent feed
210 supplement can reduce 320 Tg of CO₂-eq emissions from cattle – almost half of the current
211 global enteric methane emissions. Overall, 35.6 percent fewer emissions will be generated
212 compared to a business-as-usual scenario (Figure 2). Widespread commercialisation of seaweed
213 as a feed supplement can be available as early as 2022⁵⁵.

214

215 **Feasibility and mitigation impact**

216 There is no single solution to reduce GHG emissions, and a synergic combination of mitigation
217 methods is required to slow rates of ruminant enteric methane emissions (Figure 3). Although

218 mitigation feasibility depends on economic and environmental resources by region, the focus
219 should be on the strategies with immediate implementation potential. Due to differential
220 research and technological maturity of the strategies described above, heterogeneous
221 implementation could yield immediate benefits, as some of the most effective mitigation
222 strategies already exist, but are not yet deployed at scale.

223 Regional genetic research and breeding programs are necessary to select highly-productive
224 animals with lower methane-emission intensity^{20,47}. However, we show that in comparison to
225 feeding supplements and silvopasture conversion, breeding as a global strategy to mitigate
226 ruminant enteric methane emissions is not feasible in the short term and will not lead to a
227 significant mitigation impact. Based on existing developments, a global replacement of regular
228 cattle with low-methane animals will mitigate 1,943 Tg CO₂-eq emissions by 2050, representing
229 only a 6.6 percent reduction of the current rate of cattle emissions (Table 1 and Figure 2).

230 Our analyses indicate that using anti-methanogenic seaweed as a feed supplement and
231 silvopasture conversion hold the greatest impact on emissions reduction, providing benefits
232 that no other strategies permit. Seaweed and silvopasture plants not only disrupt enteric
233 methane production and convert atmospheric CO₂ into biomass, but offer sustainable
234 production pathways with much lower life-cycle emissions. Favouring seaweed and silvopasture
235 eases pressure on land and water resources, in addition to holding a carbon farming potential
236 to offset the emissions from ruminant husbandry (Figure 3)¹⁴⁴.

237 Worldwide conversion of 1.2 million hectares of grassland into silvopasture would have a net
238 carbon sequestration balance of 0.34 Tg CO₂ captured after the first year of conversion. From
239 2045 onward, silvopasture carbon storage potential would reach a plateau, capturing 102.3 Tg

240 CO₂ annually (Supplementary Table 2). Such carbon capture is equivalent to 13 percent of
241 current global cattle CO₂-eq emission. Immediate conversion to silvopasture, and
242 supplementation of anti-methanogenic seaweed in feed, could mitigate up to 46 percent of the
243 annual cattle CO₂-eq emissions – avoiding 9,082 Tg CO₂-eq emissions between 2020 to 2050.

244

245 **A reduction in cattle demand is also necessary**

246 Our analysis assumes no trend changes in the increasing demand for cattle consumption.
247 Modelling mitigation strategies for enteric methane emissions shows that carbon neutrality by
248 2050 is possible only if there is a slowdown of the growth rate of cattle consumption. Changes
249 in per capita meat consumption in Europe and Central to Eastern Asia, combined with policy
250 mitigation efforts, lower current ruminant GHG emissions¹⁰. Mitigation strategies in those
251 regions can sharpen this trend, potentially reaching carbon neutrality by 2035 and 2038,
252 respectively (Figure 2). Nevertheless, the demand for ruminant products in developing
253 countries will rise continuously due to population growth and increasing per capita meat
254 purchasing power⁹. Without mitigation, global enteric methane emissions will increase steadily
255 – particularly in Africa, Southern and Western Asia (Figure 2). Implementation of mitigation
256 strategies can reduce emissions intensity, returning to pre-1990 levels of ruminant methane
257 emissions, but this is only a 34% reduction over 2017 emissions level (Figure 2). However, our
258 results indicate that mitigation strategies alone are insufficient to achieve low enteric methane
259 emissions, and a reduction of the demand for animal products is also necessary. *Sustainable*
260 production of livestock cattle at a global scale does not seem possible, and further strategies
261 such as alternative meat production (for example, cultured meat) are necessary.

262

263 **Methods**

264 **Data source**

265 Historical data by country from 1990 to 2017 come from the FAOSTAT database of the Food
266 and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO,
267 <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data>, accessed in June 2020). Data included carbon equivalent
268 (CO₂-eq) emissions from cattle enteric methane, cattle stocks (head and tonnes of production),
269 and carbon balance of ruminant grazing grassland by area. To facilitate carbon balance analyses
270 of silvopasture conversion, FAO data were grouped into nine regions based on similarities in soil
271 type and climate regime, following the global distribution of climate zones from the
272 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, Supplementary Table 1).

273

274 **Carbon balance from silvopasture conversion**

275 We used the Grassland Livestock module of the FAO EX-Ante Carbon-balance Tool (EX-ACT
276 version 8.5.6)¹⁴⁵ to analyse soil carbon stock balance. We estimated the potential global area to
277 be converted from pasture to silvopasture using the 2017 FAO data for grazing grassland with
278 organic soil area. We considered the rough regional percentage of area with a suitable IPCC
279 climate for growing silvopasture trees and shrubs. Proper conversion can be possible in regions
280 either with areas holding a tropical to warm temperate climate, moist to wet humidity and with
281 any soil type; or in areas holding a cool temperate and moist regime with a low activity clay soil
282 type (Supplementary Table 1). Using the area percentage and regional environmental
283 descriptors (Supplementary Table 1), we analysed the soil carbon stock balance for a 30-year

284 silvopasture projection allowing an implementation phase of five years. EX-ACT estimates,
285 among others, the carbon stock changes (Tg CO₂-eq) from land-based projects using IPCC Tier 1
286 methodology for GHG inventories¹⁴⁵. Projected soil carbon balance reflects the net emissions
287 differences between a business-as-usual scenario versus converting grassland into silvopasture.
288 *Moderately Degraded* and *Improved with inputs improvement* were selected as the initial and
289 final state of the project, respectively. Supplementary Table 1 reports descriptors of climate,
290 moisture regime and dominant soil type input in EX-ACT.

291

292 Supplement potential on cattle fodder

293 Environmental factors influence decision-making on whether to feed cattle by free-grazing on
294 pasture or in feedlots. We estimated that cattle feed on fodder during 36 percent of their
295 lifespan, for approximately 420 days⁵⁶. During the cow-calves operation, young animals graze
296 freely on pasture for nine months without supplement options; for the remaining five months
297 (150 days) before slaughtering, animals are intensively fattened up with a high-quality feed that
298 can be supplemented with bromoform-rich seaweed^{56,57}. Assuming that seaweed supplements
299 reduce 98 percent of enteric methane per animal¹⁴¹, the mitigation effect would account for an
300 annual reduction of 35.6% enteric emissions in the cattle sector.

301

302 Data analyses

303 The historical data from cattle enteric methane CO₂-eq and grassland CO₂ emissions were
304 used to project 2018-2050 emissions data in a business-as-usual scenario. First, we calculated
305 the historical trend averaging the moving trends from 1991-2017. Moving trends were obtained

306 with the formula $Trend_n = Year_n * 100 / Year_{n-1}$, where $Year_n$ indicates emissions in 1991.

307 Then, we projected annual emissions using the formula

308 $Year_{n+1} = Year_n * (Historical\ trend / 100)$, with $Year_{n+1}$ indicating emissions for 2018.

309 Based on the business-as-usual projections, we projected the mitigation effect for each

310 strategy. Using seaweed supplements, we mitigated 35.64 percent emissions starting in 2022.

311 Using efficient animals, we mitigated 11 percent beginning in 2030 in Europe, Oceania and the

312 Americas; in 2035 in Asia (excluding Western Asia); and in 2040 in Western Asia and Africa.

313 Emissions using a synergic combination of all the strategies were calculated summing up the

314 annual silvopasture carbon stock changes with the yearly mitigation of 35.64 or 46.64 percent

315 emissions, according to the year of implementation. All data are expressed in Tg CO₂-eq.

316

317 **Data availability**

318 All data used in this study are publicly available in the FAOSTAT database

319 (<http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data>). Projection of enteric methane emissions and

320 silvopasture carbon balance using EX-ACT estimations are available in the Supplementary Table

321 2.

322

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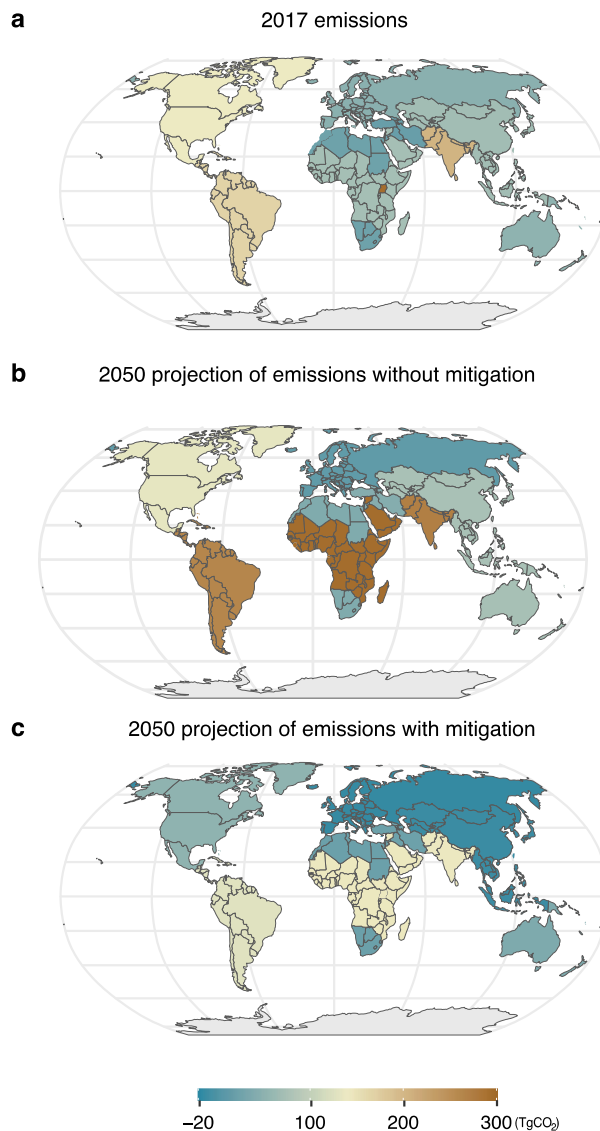
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724 **Figure 1** | Cattle-related enteric methane and CO₂ emissions from grassland grazing by country.725 **a**, Current emissions. **b**, emission by 2050 in a business-as-usual scenario. **c**, 2050 projection of

726 emissions with a synergistic combination of the most practical mitigation strategies available:

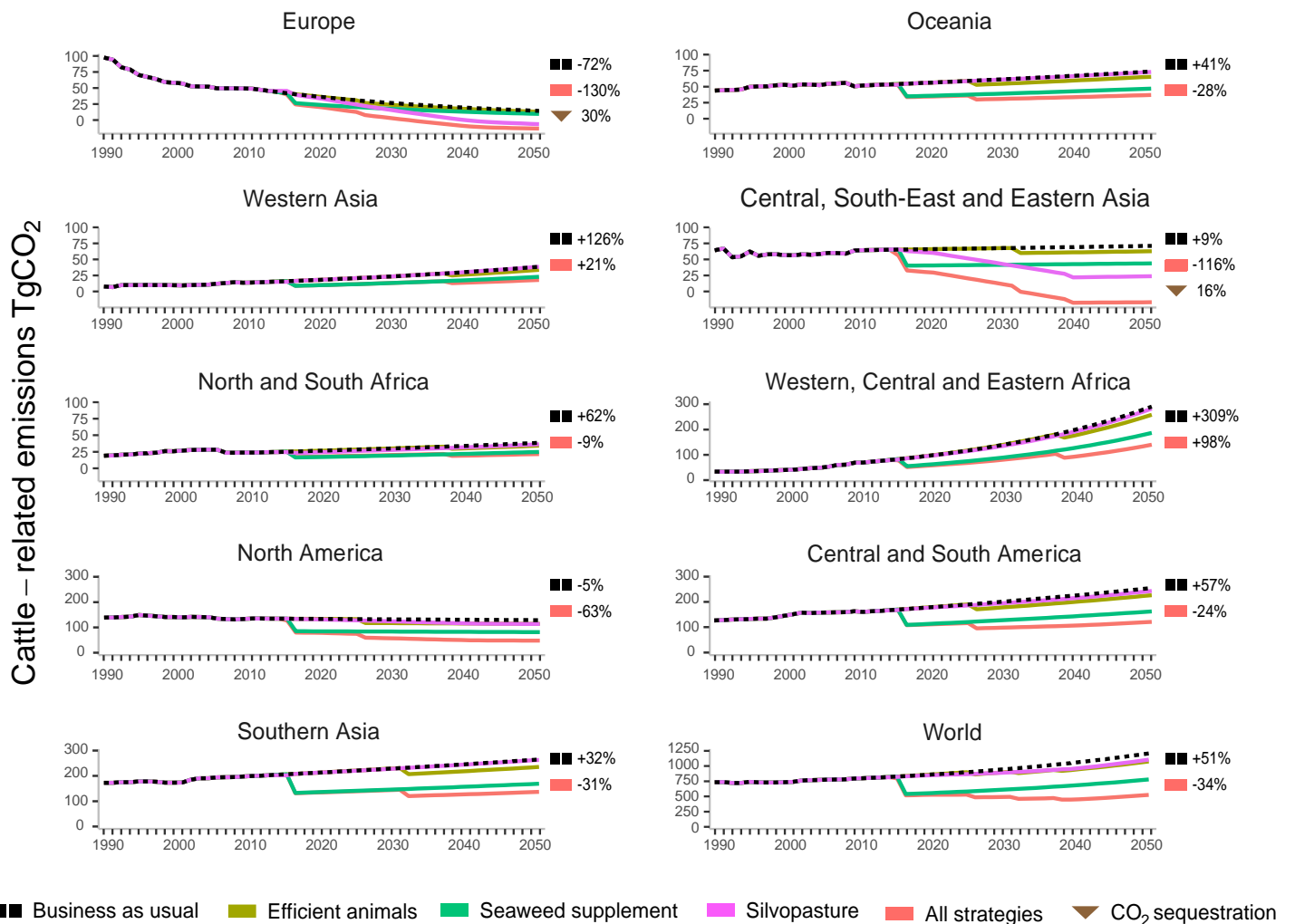
727 replacing regular breeds with genotypes for low-methane emissions, use of anti-methanogenic

728 seaweed as feed supplement, and grassland transition to silvopasture. Under a mitigation

729 scenario, Europe and most of Asia would reach carbon neutrality, in addition to offering carbon

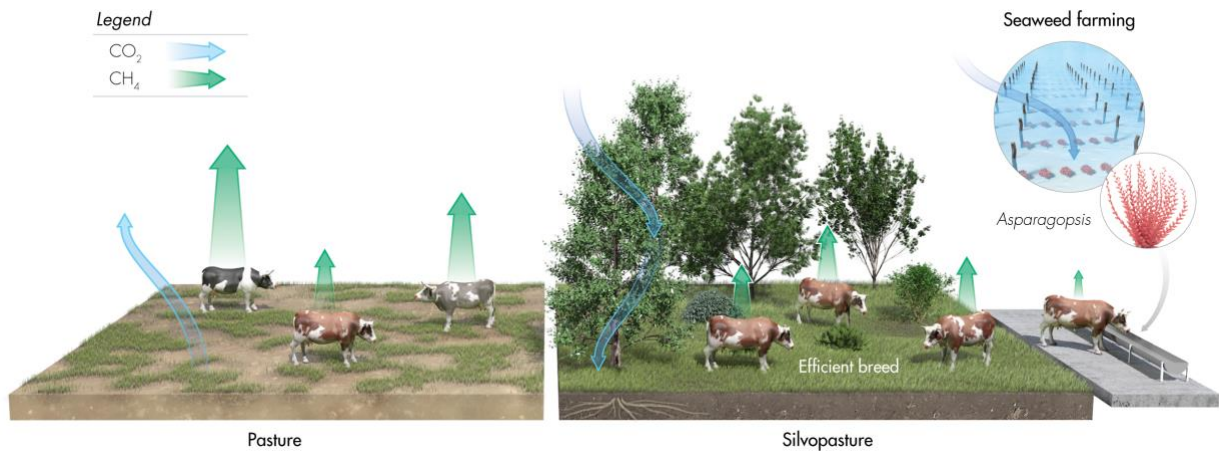
730 sequestration in soil and plant biomass from silvopasture systems (negative values in the

731 carbon stock balance; Tg CO₂ equivalent).



732

733 **Figure 2 |** Global projection of 2020-2050 GHG emissions under a business-as-usual scenario
 734 and by implementing mitigation strategies, based on 1990-2017 data from enteric and
 735 grassland-use CO₂ equivalent emissions. Trendlines dip between 2017 and 2020 after
 736 silvopasture conversion, supplementing anti-methanogenic seaweed, replacing regular cattle
 737 with genetically efficient animals, and using a synergistic implementation of all these strategies.
 738 Differences between 2050 and 2017 emissions are shown for each region, under scenarios of
 739 business-as-usual and execution of all strategies. *Europe* and *Central, South-East and Eastern*
 740 *Asia* additionally project carbon sequestration potential (brown arrows). Note the difference of
 741 scale in the emission axes.



742

743 **Figure 3 |** Plausible mitigation effects of available strategies to reduce GHG emissions directly
 744 related to cattle. Planting silvopasture plants reduces the environmental impact of fodder
 745 production while increasing soil and biomass carbon sequestration. Additionally, replacing
 746 regular breeds with low-methane animals and feeding anti-methanogenic seaweed
 747 (*Asparagopsis*) to ruminants, can increase animal productivity and reduce methane emission
 748 intensity. Seaweed production via photosynthetic carbon capture offers significant potential for
 749 transforming atmospheric carbon dioxide into ruminant biomass.

750 **Table 1** | Sum of projected cattle-related emissions from 2020 to 2050, following a business-as-usual (BAS) and mitigation scenarios
751 (TgCO₂ equivalent). Percentages indicate emissions reduced by the strategy. %*shows the reduction of emissions excluding the
752 breeding strategy. N, North; S, South; C, Central; E, Eastern; W, Western; SE, South-East.

Region	Enteric emissions			Grassland emissions		Enteric + grassland emissions	
	BAS	Seaweed (%)	Breeding (%)	BAS	Silvopasture (%)	BAS	Synergic mitigation (%/*%)
Africa N/S	919	609 (33.8)	878 (4.5)	71	71 (0)	991	991 (35.6/31.4)
Africa C/E/W	4,929	3,230 (34.5)	4,651 (5.6)	238	-139 (158.6)	5,167	5,167 (45.6/40.2)
America N	4,026	2,687 (33.3)	3728 (7.4)	210	-271 (228.7)	4,236	4,236 (50/43)
America C/S	6,620	4,387 (33.7)	6,094 (7.9)	35	-210 (707.5)	6,655	6,655 (45.2/37.2)
Asia C/SE/E	1,991	1,326 (33.4)	1,876 (5.8)	265	-847 (419.8)	2,256	2,256 (83.9/78.8)
Asia W	953	629 (34)	907 (4.9)	0	0 (0)	954	954 (38.9/34)
Asia S	7,352	4,883 (33.6)	6,908 (6)	56	-26 (146.2)	7,407	7,407 (40.4/34.4)
Europe	736	502 (31.7)	692 (5.9)	41	-371 (1006.3)	777	777 (88.7/83.1)
Oceania	1,922	1,275 (33.6)	1,771 (7.8)	52	-12 (123.5)	1,974	1,974 (43.7/36)
World	29,448	19,529 (33.7)	27,505 (6.6)	968	-1,804 (286.4)	30,415	30,415 (48.1/41.7)

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