

From the Land-grant Ranch — UF/IFAS



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To hear Gbola Adesogan tell it, the animals you raise unlock potential worldwide. To him, meat and milk are a moral cause. The proteins they deliver to children under five are the difference between stunted brain develop-

Gbola Adesogan asks at future of food.



ment and a life fully realized. He travels the world to tell it. People listen—members of Congress, foreign aid administrators, philanthropists, trade regulators, fellow scientists, and audiences in the developing world. Adesogan is fluent in the language of the thinkers that populate administration and academy, the experts whose pronouncements result in regulation and shape public perception of what you do in Manatee or Hendry counties.

They listen to Adesogan because of his reputation as a first-rate scientist in the UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences and a globe-trotting do-gooder who aims to lift millions out of poverty through better beef. Sometimes, even scientists familiar with the facts need to be reminded of them. Adesogan did so at the Future of Food Forum at the conclusion of a compelling presentation on sustainability that was supported by charts and a matrix showing higher environmental impact from livestock than other food sources.

When the moderator invited questions and comments from the audience, Adesogan was ready.

He did not refute the speaker, a colleague of his. But he gently reminded him in front of a room of distinguished scientists that a focus on carbon footprint, biodiversity loss and nitrogen application leave out an important measure of meat and milk's value.

"I guess I have some concerns about some of the numbers," Adesogan began. "By and large there's very little accounting for bioavailability of nutrients. Especially when you're thinking about things like the cost of a diet and you're looking at greenhouse gas emissions."

Bioavailability indicates whether your body actually absorbs the proteins and other nutrients in a food. Someone who reaches for oat milk or almond milk instead of what Adesogan
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From The Land...

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called "real milk" may be getting the same number of grams of protein per glass, but they may be missing a number of important micronutrients they can only get from the real deal.

In trying to calculate the cost and value of a food, Adesogan said, environmental impact is fair game. But compromising on nutrition, he argued, is no path to sustainability.

He didn't stop there. He said, "Some of the livestock products have comparable or even less emissions and impacts on land, on water, on greenhouse gases, than is commonly thought."

The speaker demurred. He acknowledged the need to bring more livestock scientists into the conversation about how to cal-



Gbola Adesogan
at Nepal

culate sustainability.

As leader of the U.S. Agency for International Development-funded Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems at UF/IFAS, Adesogan works in nine nations. What he learns can add to what we know about how to manage ranches in Polk or Okeechobee counties to mitigate animals' heat stress, boost their nutritional value or reduce

emissions from grazing.

He's not just sharing this with you. He's driving the conversation in the academy, in public policy, and in professional associations. When he's not running a worldwide cattle research and Extension program, he's speaking to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the American Meat Science Association or authoring scientific journal articles.

For example, he recently published a study that challenges Food and Drug Administration and European safe food standards for overstating the danger of cancer from aflatoxins in milk. It suggests that millions of gallons of milk are dumped because of misperceptions of risk.

When I needed a thought leader to organize a massive grant proposal to the USDA to promote the practice of climate-smart agriculture in Florida and Georgia, I turned to Adesogan.

I knew I'd made the right choice when, during one of the numerous Zoom meetings that become necessary to corral a herd of scientists, Adesogan laid out his vision for sustainable animal agriculture.

A win on climate-smart practices has to be a win for animals and a win for ranchers' profits, he told the group, because by reducing cattle carbon and nitrogen loss to the environment we increase their use to support meat and milk production.

They, too, listened.

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