

Hidden Hunger versus Impertinent Intemperance: Some Dogs and Cats Feed Gourmet-Quality – and a Lot of People Eat Dirt An Eye-Opener - Not a Vision

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Abstract:

“Sustainable Intensification of Agriculture through Resource Management and Conservation” is the title of the 9th International Seminar of IFSDAA in Göttingen, July 2017. Resource Management and Conservation are key topics of this seminar, but a sustainable or ethical use of resources or in other words, for which purpose our resources are used, should be considered as well.

End of last century, there were 235.000.000 dogs and 245.000.000 cats on earth. Data from 2012 are showing, that 300 million companion dogs and 600 million stray and free-ranging dogs were living on our globe. Two thirds of the total global companion dog population lives in just ten countries (USA, Brazil, China, Mexico, Japan, Russia, UK, France Indonesia, Italy).

By 2025 it can be foreseen, that the number will go up to 360 million companion dogs and may be, by 2050 there will be over 475 million companion dogs on earth plus non assessable hundreds of millions of stray and free-ranging dogs.

All these pets need significant amount of feed/food and consume significant amount of natural resources. According to Global Industry Analysts (GIA, 2012), “the rise of ‘alone or single-person families’ and a decreasing birthrate means that pets are increasingly being considered family members and companions – not just animals. The change attitude, combined with growing urbanization and an increase in disposable income, have contributed to the increase in number of households owning pets – which in turn – drives the demand for pet foods.”

Pet foods represents one of the fastest growing sectors in the food industry. In 1998 the global pet food market was 30 billion Euro, in 2009 it was 56 billion Euro, in 2017 it will be 74 billion Euro and by 2021 the market will increase to more than 117 billion Euro. This means, that within 25 years, there is an increase of the pet food market by factor of 4! Furthermore, the pet foods are highly specified and specifically adapted to the different races, age, physiological fitness, obesity, and health of the pets – often better prepared than for human beings. Meanwhile, halal dog and cat food is marketed reflecting the increasing number of pets in islamic countries.

On the other hand, almost all the hungry people, 780 million, live in developing countries, representing 12.9 percent, or one in eight, of the population of developing countries. Furthermore, more than one-third of under-five deaths are attributable to undernutrition, 165 million children under 5 are stunted, and 51 million children suffer from wasting. Beginning 2017, Kenya Red Cross estimated about 2.7 million people were in need for food aid after a severe draught - in Somalia 6 million people, and in Ethiopia 10.2 million people.

Just as a reminder: serving a dog with 200g/day or 400g/day implicates a proportional paw/foot print of 0.18-0.36 ha arable land/year. Furthermore, e.g. the CO₂-Paw Print of a cat in Germany is 2.2 t CO₂/year and comparable to 2.3 t CO₂/year produced by a person living in Egypt - a child in USA: 9.4 t CO₂/year; a child in China: 1,4 t CO₂/year; a child in Bangladesh: 0.06 t CO₂/year. The human induced CO₂-Paw Print of pets is a print related to soil, water, climate change, environment and last but not least to humans.

At the moment, around 10 percent of arable land for global crop production/food production is consumed by global pets – tendency is increasing! The question is: Is this, what we want?

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