



Season 4, Episode 3: Domestic and International Sustainability

Shane McAuliffe, Munster Technological University, Ireland, and Tom Battagliese, Global Sustainability Metrics, NJ, discuss what sustainability looks like in different parts of the world and how it has evolved to what it is today.

Background

Sustainability in pork production doesn't look the exact same everywhere in the world. In this episode, we discuss The European Green Deal and the farm to fork strategy as the driver to make Europe the first carbon neutral continent in the world. When it comes to the US, one of the biggest areas for environmental impact in pork production comes from feed. Whether it's common practices on farms, farrowing crates, solar panels, or formulating feed diets, sustainability has become part of the conversation in all areas of pork production across the world in order to create the "pork of the future".

European Sustainability

The European Green Deal was approved in 2020 dealing with various sectors and industries with the goal of making them more sustainable working towards being carbon neutral. While European countries may be under the same commission, policies vary between countries due to their views of agriculture and present implications. For example, countries dealing with ASF have been working towards converting to more sustainable integrated systems like those in the US, or the decision for the EU commission to phase out farrowing crates in upcoming years has proved to be a learning curve for many producers. Producers in countries like Ireland, which has the lowest carbon footprint in Europe, make contentious efforts alongside their government to recycle water, provide grants for producers, and use sustainable grains and byproducts.

US Practices

Sustainability in the US for many has evolved in many different ways. But one of the biggest practices for producers is the industry looking to formulate diets on a least cost basis. Fifty to 80% of pork production is the result of the diet of the animal, so ensuring feed is sustainable is the first step to making your pork product sustainable. By establishing nutrition parameters that are optimal for the animal then adjusting those parameters based on current commodity prices, producers are trying to make the biggest impact on the nutritional side in order to make sustainable animal protein.

Implications and Incentives

When it comes to profitability for producing sustainable pork for producers, we may begin to see more incentives from retailer or restaurants in the near future. Whether it's paying farmers to meet the expectations of consumers or retailers, or helping farmers realize certain cost reductions for possible values through the supply chain, this give producers a chance to benefit from producing sustainable pork. Right now, primary data is collected straight from the farm level through the production phase to show the primary footprint of a pork chop or tenderloin you might see on the retail shelf. What we need is more secondary data at the feed or crop level, all chemical and energy inputs into all phases of system to be able to accurately compare the individual footprints of pork production, from start to finish.

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