

Global Warming Is there a better way?

The major focus for action on global warming appears to be to negotiate international agreements to reduce fossil fuel consumption. These appear to be difficult to achieve and doubtful in their effectiveness. As China and India become more affluent, their fossil fuel use appears bound to expand regardless of government promises. Other approaches are needed.

The action of sunlight on vegetation is a major means for absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Good management of pasture land with cattle can provide a 14% increase in vegetation each year as the quality of soil and pasture improves. However if all the world's pasture land was managed that well, my rough calculations indicate it would only absorb 4% of the world's fossil fuel emissions.

It is clear the world is not putting itself right with increased vegetation or we would notice it.

The work of the Macaulay Institute in Kazakhstan, featured in 'Prospects for Pastoralism in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan: From state farms to private flocks' edited by Carol Kerven, Routledge 2003, showed how improved land use could increase vegetation and supportable livestock numbers.

"Extensive livestock production based on seasonal movement remains the most efficient way of exploiting the natural resources of Kazak rangelands. Greater concentration of animals around settlements and water, stemming from a loss of mobility, is having localised damaging effects on pasture productivity" (I. Alimaev, in PP p.31-32).

Work by the Allan Savory Center, reported by their farmers from Nevada to Australia indicates how pasture land can be reclaimed and enriched using animals. In one case the annual improvement in vegetation achieved per steer was 652kgs. This absorbs the carbon dioxide from 222 litres of fuel each year. A tax of 10c per litre would provide \$22 per annum, or sufficient to finance a loan for the purchase a calf.

It would appear that by financing herds and flocks in 3rd world countries and by grazing them nomadically a contribution could be made to absorbing global carbon dioxide. At the same time poverty and unemployment would be reduced and desertification reversed. The limiting factor appears to be the very low percentage of rain (0.008%) which can be captured and turned into vegetation by pasture. Can improved species, soil improvement or genetic modification improve this percentage?

Developed countries could gain a benefit too from such a vast project. It can be argued that pension funds underperform because the return on capital is too low. Too much capital is available so the rates of return are low and getting lower. A large bond issue would benefit the developed world if the interest were paid by a carbon tax.

At present global warming is a long way down the list of priorities for most countries because action is not in their national interest. Can it be linked to the reverse of poverty and desertification and the funding of pensions so that there are benefits for a wide range of countries? Would the emerging technologies developed for optimising carbon capture and monitoring the global projects be sufficient to interest USA and developed countries?

What are the other actions in forests, oceans and husbandry which can benefit the poor, stimulate economies, and reverse global warming?