

Food+ Research Symposium
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Faculty Abstract

[Robert Paarlberg](#)

Adjunct Professor of Public Policy, HKS
EMAIL: Robert_Paarlberg[at]hks.harvard.edu

Regulating Tomorrow's World of Meat and Fish.

ABSTRACT: Meat consumption in the developing world will double between now and 2050, and fish consumption will increase rapidly as well (in China fish consumption has been doubling every decade since 1990). These future food needs will be satisfied not through an expansion of traditional barnyard, grazing, and wild catch systems, but from a steady introduction of more highly capitalized and specialized industrial systems, including “factory farm” concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and farmed fish aquaculture systems.

As these industrial systems expand in the developing world, the regulatory environment will be important. CAFO and aquaculture systems are well regulated for food safety in the United States, but much less so for environmental protection and scarcely at all for antibiotic use (a human health risk) or animal welfare. In Europe, stronger environmental protections are in place, antibiotic use to promote animal weight gain has been banned, and animal welfare standards in some countries (e.g., Germany) are extremely high. For these and other reasons, livestock systems in Europe are high-cost compared to American systems.

My new research project asks if tomorrow's livestock systems (and aquaculture systems) in the developing countries will follow the American or the European model. Also, will this choice be driven by a global extension of corporate best practices, or by public sector measures? Will the rapid expansion of industrial meat and fish production systems in developing countries produce a regulatory race to the bottom, the top, or the middle?