**Climate Change Controversy**

**Class activity for Chapter 7**

***Food, Farms and Community***

**Material Requirements: None**

**Time Requirement: 60 minutes**

Globally, the question of *whether* human activity is having an impact on earth’s climate by altering the concentration of greenhouse gasses in the planet’s atmosphere has faded, and businesses, governments and citizens are now faced with understanding *how* and *to what degree* human activities impact earth’s climate. These questions are particularly relevant with respect to the food sector broadly, and to the implications of meat-rich diets and the raising of livestock in particular.

One report that sent shockwaves through the agricultural community was produced by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization in 2006 and titled *Livestock’s Long Shadow*. This report was and remains extremely controversial, as among its conclusions is that livestock production globally contributes at least 18 percent of total global greenhouse gas emissions. For this activity, break your class into two groups (or pairs of groups of the class is quite large), and assign one group the task of making a case in support of this report’s primary conclusions, using the wealth of data that has been released since the report’s initial publication. The other group should be assigned the task of rebutting the report’s conclusions, again using a wealth of data that has been published since 2006. This data may be found via the *Resources* listed in the Curriculum.

This activity should be organized much like a debate, with groups assigned their tasks during one class period and the actual debate held during a subsequent class. The primary goal of this activity is to coax students to look into the methods underlying the report *Livestock’s Long Shadow*, as well as the methodological intricacies of other related reports and technical articles that either support or undermine its conclusions. When students study the methods, hopefully they will realize that taking numbers generated by reports or even peer-reviewed articles at face value is very risky. Two reports might deliver very different estimates of a process’s greenhouse gas emissions, but at the same time might not contradict each other at all because the report that suggested a higher value may simply have had a more expansive scope, while the report that suggested a lower value may have been more limited in scope.