

ANIMAL WELFARE GROUP | COUNTRY PROFILE | BRAZIL

KEY METRICS

(All figures are approximate)



POPULATION



212,366,132



17,614,454



37,930,307



8,851,879



38,160,000

Cattle slaughtered in 2014



37,130,094

Pigs slaughtered in 2014



5,367,000

Sheep slaughtered in 2014

2016 BEEF CONSUMPTION



35.8
kgs/capita
(78.9 lbs/capita)



The objective of the country profiles is to provide an overview of the animal welfare landscape and the differences between regions. The information provided is general in nature and a summary of facts, it does not represent the opinion of Leather Working Group. The country profiles are living documents, that are reviewed and updated from time to time. While Leather Working Group has taken due care to ensure the information is accurate as of the date of publication, the information is provided on an "as is" basis and we make no representation or warranty as to its accuracy. Please note that examples of high-quality and low-quality animal welfare can be identified in every region. Leather Working Group is not liable to any person for any loss suffered or incurred as a result of reliance on the information.

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SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

Transport

- There is some legislation detailing which animals are permitted to be transported, including regulations about documentation and destination.
- Legislation does not specify for how long an animal can be transported.

Traceability

- Existing traceability systems in Brazil mean that livestock can be tracked from birth to slaughter, however these systems account for only the minority of animals.
- Efforts are being made to improve the traceability of all animals, to enhance the attractiveness of Brazilian exports.

Slaughter

- Legislation regarding the slaughter of animals is in place in Brazil and slaughterhouses are inspected to ensure these laws are followed.
- Approximately 20% of slaughter is either conducted in unlicensed facilities or is unreported by regulated slaughterhouses.

Legislation

- Brazil has legislation for various aspects of animal welfare, including transport and transport.
- Some terms are not sufficiently defined, allowing for flexibility in the interpretation of the law.

Governance

- There is evidence of some corruption in Brazil, including allegations made against politicians for their relationships with meat packing companies.
- Evidence also suggests that many laws are simply not enforced.

NGO Activity

- NGOs in Brazil direct much of their attention at deforestation. Some scrutiny is therefore directed at cattle farming, which is recognised as one of the drivers of illegal deforestation.

FARMING

Brazil has one of the largest beef herds in the world with over 220 million head of cattle¹. The cattle are predominantly a mixture of Zebu and Hereford. The sheep herd is significantly smaller than bovine, at approximately 17 million¹.

As the world's biggest exporter of beef^{2,3}, Brazil's cattle herds expanded by 200% between 1993 and 2013⁴. However, cattle supplies have become limited in recent years, due to high slaughter rates and insufficient volumes of rain in the highest cattle producing areas of the centre-west region⁵. Approximately one in every three tonnes of beef traded internationally is sourced from Brazil³. Within the south and southwest of Brazil, milk production accounts for up to 30% of all cattle production systems⁶.

Nathalie Walker of National Wildlife Federation (NWF) stated that the Amazon covers half of Brazil, and it holds around one third of all cattle in Brazil. An increase in livestock farming is being encouraged by the government, in all areas including the Amazon Biome.

The number of farms in the government property registration database has increased since the G4 agreement (aka the Zero Deforestation Agreement) was signed in 2012, which states that those participating will not purchase cattle from farms contributing to illegal deforestation. The largest increase in registered farms was by those that directly supply signatories in the meatpacking industry, in order to maintain their relationship⁷. To become CAR (Cadastro Ambiental Rural - the Rural Environmental Registry) registered, ranchers must provide GPS coordinates of the boundaries of their properties⁸. This has allowed satellite tracking to become increasingly accurate, and much of the Amazon Biome has now been mapped through satellite data. It should be noted that satellite imaging does not consider slope, causing some properties to overlap and work is required to confirm the accuracy of registered properties⁹. Land grabbing is a large problem within Brazil, and some guilty parties can register land as their own even though it was obtained illegally⁹.

TRANSPORT

Brazil have created the Decree 5741, which states that documentation (The Animal Transit Guide) must be present for the movement of all bovines, buffaloes, sheep and goats. The Animal Transit Guide (GTA) must outline the destination, health of the animal, and the purpose of transportation^{10,11}. If the physical fitness of an animal is unclear, a veterinarian must assess the animal and deem it fit for travel before transportation can begin¹².

Animals should be rested, fed and watered at acceptable intervals¹¹, however the frequency and duration of these activities are not specified in any legislation. The total time and length of travel for cattle in vehicles is not specified, but it is illegal to force an animal to travel by foot for more than 10km without rest¹³.

TRACEABILITY

All properties that supply animals to meatpackers for export to the European Union must participate in SISBOV, a programme requiring the identification and tracking of livestock via earrings, brands, tattoos and electronic devices¹⁴. This allows the tracking of livestock from birth to slaughter, alongside recording and identifying the bovine and buffalo herd of the national territory. NWF stated that SISBOV is not widespread, as it is for EU beef exports only, but is still a good traceability system and compliance is monitored by authorities.

A new form of radio frequency identification (RFID) technology has recently been introduced to the Brazilian market. RFID is a technology that uses radio waves to transmit information. An RFID system consists of reader antennas, tags and a computer system. The tag identifies itself to the reader by sending a unique identification number through a radio link. Brazil has the ability to manufacture these tags which has helped keep costs down, and whilst the use of RFID tagging is not widespread, uptake is increasing due to the lower costs and increased convenience compared to the manual tracking of livestock with paper records^{15,16}.

Global bans on the imports of Brazilian meat due to lack of traceability¹⁷ and safety concerns¹⁸, has also led to an increase in the tagging of animals in an attempt to make the meat safer. In part, this has led the government to state that traceability will become mandatory in the future¹⁹, but the timeframe for this is currently unclear.

SLAUGHTERING

The Sacrifice of Animals is a governmental document that states all slaughterhouses must have a specific plan for animal welfare. Any persons working within the slaughterhouse must be aware of all recommendations for operations and the implementation at a national level²⁰. Inspection of the wellbeing and health of every animal should be carried out upon arrival at the slaughterhouse with distractions kept to a minimum²⁰.

Animals must be handled with minimal discomfort and excitement, and the use of aggressive instruments is forbidden, allowing animals a quick death without suffering¹⁰. Stunning is the preferred method of achieving unconsciousness, however a blow to the head with a suitable blunt instrument may also be acceptable²⁰.

All animals must have access to food in acceptable intervals unless they are being slaughtered within 12 hours, with the exception of sick and injured animals who should be slaughtered humanely and without delay²⁰.

The official cattle slaughter number is approximately 38 million head²¹, but a significant quantity of unregulated/illegal slaughter also takes place. NWF stated that around 20% of slaughter is illegal and that not all slaughterhouses report accurate figures for the number of animals that they process. Indication lies in the fact that there are 20% more hides available in the market than official recorded numbers of cattle slaughtered. This disconnect shows illegal or unreported slaughter must be happening.

HIDES, SKIN & LEATHER

Despite being the worlds largest exporter of beef, the vast majority is consumed locally. The official kill is approximately 38 million head per year, but there is a significant unregulated slaughtering conducted rurally for both commercial and personal consumption. This unregulated market is estimated to be between 5-8 million animals per year.

In terms of sheep, there is a kill of around 5 million animals, with the majority exported to China, Spain and Italy²².

While there is a reasonable amount of finished leather produced in Brazil for the local market, a significant proportion is exported. The vast majority is exported as wet blue grains or wet blue splits. Brazil's biggest export market is China (390 million USD or 6-7 million hides), Italy (200 million USD, 3-4 million hides), Vietnam (65 million USD). Brazil is a major exporter of semi-finished wet blue and crust leathers^{22, 23}.

The climate and free-range style of ranching means that Brazilian material can be of lower quality, with insect damage, branding and scratches commonly found. For this reason, it is predominantly used for lower end leathers such as corrected grain crust used in the automotive sector and footwear upper leathers.

The production of leather may decrease due to the complications in Brazil regarding slaughterhouses being closed amid accusations of corruption. The long-term implications and severity of this is currently unknown²⁴.

LEGISLATION & REGULATION

The OIE World Organisation for Animal Health Standards form a significant basis of Brazil's animal welfare legislation, which includes The Terrestrial Animal Health Code (2016), a key document concerning animal welfare including, but not limited to: the transport of animals, slaughter of animals and welfare of working equids²⁵.

The Federal Decree defines acts of abuse as: confining an animal in a cruel manner; overworking an animal; to wound, injure or mutilate an animal; to cause an animal to fight with another; to train an animal by means of physical punishment¹³. Some acts of abuse lack definition, allowing interpretation from individuals on what they can and cannot do under legislation.

The Supreme Court rules that it is forbidden to carry out any practice that submits animals to cruelty and that "animals have the right to legal protection against suffering and mistreatment"²⁶. It has also banned popular traditions involving the suffering of animals, such as cock fighting and the Farra do Boi (festival of the Ox)¹³.

GOVERNANCE

Information on governance is subjective; therefore all information presented is anecdotal. This document uses the independently published Global Corruption Index to assess the level of governance in each country.

Brazil is ranked joint 79th on the Global Corruption Index, alongside India and China²⁷, suggesting that although legislation may be in place, governance and compliance is not a key priority.

Recently, there have been increased concerns over the governance of legislation and laws in Brazil, with corruption between politicians and large meat packing companies being exposed through the media ^{28, 29, 30}.

It is a legal requirement to register your land to the land and environmental management CAR, however many landowners have made the decision not to comply with this⁷. The decision not to comply is largely due to the lack of enforcement and consequences for not registering. Similarly, efforts to reduce and prevent illegal deforestation have been unsuccessful due to a lack of action being taken against those that do not comply with legislation and programmes^{7, 8}.

NGO ACTIVITY

NGO activity in Brazil is largely focused on deforestation of the Amazon, rather than animal welfare. Greenpeace are one of the most predominant NGOs in Brazil and have carried out numerous campaigns on the Amazon. Although it does not account for 100% of the deforestation that has occurred, cattle ranching is a key driver³. In an attempt to combat deforestation, three of Brazil's largest meatpacking companies have vouched not to purchase from ranchers that have illegally contributed to deforestation^{31, 32}. However, the agreement by the meatpackers has created a market for cattle laundering, whereby farms within the Biome sell their stock to a farm outside of the Biome, or to ranches within compliance to the forest code, to then sell to the companies signed to the agreement^{7, 32, 33}.

A campaign of note is PETA's (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) video exposé featuring investigative footage from the BGO Repórter Brasil of several cattle ranches in Brazil showing mistreatment of animals. The footage reveals cows and bulls being branded on the face and neck before being slaughtered. Other mistreatment included electroshocking and beating. At the time of the investigation, hides from the farms were going to a major leather manufacture destined for the automotive industry³⁴.

FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES

Farm assurance is a low priority in Brazil, with a larger focus on the physical production of livestock, rather than the quality of their life and how they are treated.

The Sustainable Agriculture Standard was created by the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), designed to give guidance to farmers of crop and cattle production. The standard focuses on various aspects of sustainable farming including, but not limited to, afforestation (the growth of new forest), the humane treatment of animals, the lack of harmful chemicals and pesticides, and the conservation of biodiversity. The identification of animals is mandatory for a farm to be certified under this standard³⁵. Certification of such schemes is not a high priority for cattle farmers, with only five cattle farms being certified to date³⁶. A representative of SAN stated that cattle farmers often only seek certification when the demand is there. As much of the population are not demanding cattle from certified farms, farmers do not feel obliged to become certified.

Rainforest Alliance work with SAN, but also have a large presence around the Amazon Biome, working closely with various parties in and around the area. Rainforest Alliance offer certification for cattle farms that treat their cattle humanely, reforest their land and reduce their carbon footprint ³⁷. The number of certified farms is minimal.





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Reviewed by National Wildlife Federation

Leather Working Group

The Pinnacle
170 Midsummer Boulevard
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire MK9 1FE
United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)1604 679999
E: info@leatherworkinggroup.com
www.leatherworkinggroup.com

