

# ANIMAL WELFARE GROUP COUNTRY PROFILE | INDIA

## KEY METRICS

(All figures are approximate)



### POPULATION



226,830,000  
Excluding buffalo



75,770,000



108,700,000



162,579,000



11,130,000



1,623

Licensed slaughterhouses in India



30%

Of total meat production from Buffalo



160 million  
tonnes

The vast majority of animals are dairy

### 2016 BEEF CONSUMPTION



**1.8**  
kgs/capita  
(3.9lbs/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 little legislation surrounding the transport of animals within India. It is difficult to know to what extent the regulations that are in place are enforced.
- Many animals raised informally are transported by foot and as such are not protected by any legislation.
- Cattle are illegally smuggled from some regions for slaughter in Bangladesh. These cattle are often subjected to conditions that are unsuitable and illegal for transportation.

### **Traceability**

- Efforts to provide bovine animals with an ear tag have recently begun in India. However, a minority of these animals have been tagged so far. The number of informal farming operations means it is unlikely that most animals will be tagged.
- No such tagging efforts exist for caprine and ovine animals.

### **Slaughter**

- Much of the slaughter in India is conducted at unregistered facilities. Of the slaughterhouses that are known, the majority are informal or outdated.
- Whilst India is bound to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1960), there is little evidence that animals are rendered unconscious at all slaughter facilities.

### **Legislation**

- In 2011, India proposed an Animal Welfare Act but this has not yet been passed into law. The current legislation is based on the 1960 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act which stipulates that animals should not be treated in a "cruel" manner.
- In 2017, legislation was passed outlawing the trade of cattle for slaughter. However, this was later overturned.

### **Governance**

- There is a relatively high level of corruption in India.
- There is evidence that legislation is often unenforced.

### **NGO Activity**

- The treatment of cattle in India attracts significant attention from NGOs. These NGOs regularly run campaigns about India's meat and dairy industries.



India has the largest population of domestic cattle, water buffaloes, sheep and goats in the world<sup>1</sup>, most of which are raised on farms that are subsistence based or small holdings<sup>2</sup>. Many of these animals are not raised on “farms” but are kept on common ground or in backyards<sup>2</sup>. Animals are typically sold for slaughter in small numbers on a need basis for revenue<sup>1b</sup>. It is estimated that around 15% of India’s population is involved in the livestock sector<sup>3</sup>.

India is the largest milk producer in the world and contains approximately 75 million dairy farms<sup>3,4</sup>. While the dairy sector is the most organised livestock-based industry in India, government- supported dairy cooperatives and private sector dairies comprise only 25% of the total milk production<sup>3,4</sup>.

More than 90% of India’s milk production occurs in 14 states (the top five states being Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Punjab)<sup>4</sup>. There are few dairy organisations that operate across all of India, and most sell products at state and regional scales<sup>4</sup>.

Indian dairy production is generally a low input/low output system characterised mainly by small and marginal farmers owning fewer than five cows or water buffalo<sup>4,5</sup>. The yield is significantly less than in the UK or US (22kg and 28kg per day respectively)<sup>4</sup>. The lower milk yield is due to genetics, lack of nutritional feeds and inadequate veterinary services<sup>4</sup>. Despite this, India’s 2017 fluid milk production was 160 million metric tons.

Water buffaloes are preferred by some farmers due to the higher fat content of their milk. Unlike domestic cattle (the slaughter of which is banned or restricted in most of India), water buffaloes can be sold for slaughter in most states.

India houses around 58% of the global buffalo population, most of which are farmed in backyard and small holdings<sup>6</sup>. While most buffalo are farmed for milk, animals are also frequently used for draught as mechanical tools are often unavailable<sup>7</sup>. Once the animal’s milk productivity begins to decline, most buffalo are then processed for their meat<sup>6</sup>. Productivity is generally low with regards to both milk and meat, largely because buffalo raised in backyard or small holdings are fed diets consisting mainly of roughage and seasonal green fodder and concentrates, rather than a diet designed to promote weight gain<sup>6</sup>. Buffalo meat accounts for 30% of total meat produced in India, however few animals are raised solely for this purpose<sup>6</sup>.

As with buffalo, caprine animals are farmed for both milk and meat, and raised mainly in backyard and small holdings by marginal farmers seeking to supplement income and ensure food security<sup>8</sup>. In 2012, India produced the greatest quantity of caprine milk and the 2nd greatest quantity of caprine meat globally<sup>8</sup>. Most caprine animals are raised extensively (allowed to roam freely), and productivity is usually low<sup>5,8</sup>. Products are typically used for subsistence, and any excess may be sold to traders who then sell to market<sup>5,8</sup>. There has, however, been a rise in the number of commercial and precision caprine farms in recent years<sup>5</sup>. Motivated by the growing domestic demand for animal-protein, these facilities are opening mainly in the states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal<sup>5</sup>.

Domestic meat consumption in India is relatively low as a significant proportion of the population are vegetarian while many others seldom eat meat. In addition, the slaughter of cows is restricted in most Indian states, although there are fewer restrictions on buffaloes and oxen, and generally none on sheep and goats. Poultry is the main significant source of meat in India.

## TRANSPORT

Livestock in India may be transported for a variety of reasons. For example, it is common for livestock to be transported from farms to markets, and from farms to slaughter facilities<sup>6</sup>. Relatively few live animals are imported or exported from India, however the country does export a relatively significant number of live caprine animals (around US\$ 30 million in 2017, 98% of which were sent to Nepal and the United Arab Emirates)<sup>9</sup>.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1960) makes it an offence to transport an animal in a manner that is “cruel”<sup>10</sup>. In this context, cruelty involves the transportation of animal in a manner that leads to the infliction of pain and suffering, for example by failing to provide adequate food, water and rest, and deliberately causing physical harm<sup>10</sup>. While the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1960) establishes broad principles regarding animal welfare in transport, specific requirements to which the transport of live animals must adhere falls outside of its scope<sup>11,12</sup>. Rules for the Transportation of Animals (1978) sets additional requirements for the transport of bovine, ovine, porcine and caprine animals by rail, road and air<sup>11,12</sup>. For example, it is stipulated that any containers must be fitted in a way that provides protection from weather, and that livestock must only be loaded after being provided with food and water<sup>11,12</sup>. It is also made a requirement that livestock are accompanied by a veterinary certificate indicating fitness to travel<sup>11,12</sup>.

There is little legislation specifying accepted journey times, and the frequency with which animals should be provided with rest, food and water during transport remains unlegislated. The Central Motor Vehicles Amendment Rules (2015) makes it a requirement that all vehicles involved in the transport of live animals contain permanent dividers, as well as establishing a minimum space requirement per animal<sup>13</sup>. The extent to which this legislation is enforced and adopted remains unclear, and several reports have suggested that universal adoption is yet to be achieved<sup>13</sup>.

The transportation of cattle has been criminalised or restricted in several Indian states, including the Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab; all of which are significant in the production of either leather or milk<sup>14</sup>. Offences can lead to prison sentences of several years depending on location<sup>14</sup>.

Restrictions on the slaughter of cattle in India has led to incidents of animals being illegally smuggled into Bangladesh, where slaughter is permissible, using improvised methods that are not intended for the safe movement of livestock<sup>15</sup>. Many cows are shipped across India from the south and east to West Bengal and Tamil Nadu for legal slaughter. The transport conditions are often extremely poor involving vehicles that are inadequate for livestock to undergo such long journeys.

It should be noted that animals raised informally in backyard facilities and small holdings are frequently transported by foot. There is little evidence to suggest that the transport of animals in this manner is governed by any legislation beyond the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1960).

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## TRACEABILITY

Implementing an effective livestock traceability system in India is challenging due to the vast number of facilities in which livestock is raised<sup>16</sup>. The challenge is complicated further by the prevalence of informal livestock farming in which animals are birthed, raised and slaughtered outside of formal, regulated structures<sup>16</sup>. Moreover, small holder farmers are generally reluctant to engage with systems of traceability, meaning that methods that are available often have relatively little uptake<sup>16</sup>.

In 2017, the Indian federal government announced plans to establish a new traceability system covering the national bovine population<sup>17,18</sup>. The Information Network for Animal Productivity and Health (INAPH) is in an initial process of providing India's entire milk-producing bovine animals with an ear tag containing a unique twelve digit identification number, which is stored centrally alongside the information regarding the animal's species, breed, pedigree, calving, milk production, and vaccination history<sup>18,19</sup>. Farms on which animals are housed are also registered, allowing for the animal's life history to be traced. At the time of publication, more than 22.5 million bovine animals and around 13 million farmers had registered<sup>18</sup>. Once the scheme has accounted for milk-producing bovine animals, it will be extended to all other bovine animals<sup>18,19</sup>. It should be noted that participation with the INAPH project is voluntary, and it remains unclear if, and when, the tagging process will be completed<sup>17,18</sup>.

INAPH is focused only on bovine animals. Caprine and ovine animals are not covered by INAPH, and there is no evidence that a traceability system accounting for caprine and ovine animals will emerge in the future.





## SLAUGHTERING

The systems by which livestock is slaughtered in India are multifaceted and complex. It is not possible to attain a viable estimate of the number of livestock slaughtered in India, largely because a substantial proportion of total slaughter is undertaken informally at unregistered and backyard facilities. Based on figures from 2016, it is estimated that there around 5,500 registered and 4,500 unregistered slaughterhouses in India (backyard slaughter cannot be quantified)<sup>19</sup>. It is likely that this figure has since changed, mainly as a result of a more hard-line approach by federal government towards the slaughter of bovine animals within India since 2017<sup>20,21,22</sup>. 80% of India's population is Hindu, and as a result, the slaughter of cows, bulls, and bullocks (all of which are viewed as sacred) is banned across most of the country. Therefore, buffalo meat accounts for the majority of India's beef production and export<sup>6</sup>.

The majority of livestock raised in backyard and small holdings is used for a variety of purposes (e.g. milk production, wool production, draught)<sup>6,7</sup>. As a result, it is relatively uncommon for animals to be raised solely for meat, and many animals are sent to slaughter as a result of injury, old age, and illness that reduces their viability for alternative use<sup>6,7</sup>. The facilities in which slaughter is undertaken is variable. Many livestock are slaughtered in backyard facilities by family members of those involved in the animal's farming<sup>6</sup>. The meat produced in such instances is usually for the purpose of subsistence, and any surplus will likely be sold locally<sup>6</sup>. It is also common for livestock to be sold to local butchers who will slaughter the animal before selling its products<sup>6</sup>. In both scenarios it is unlikely the slaughter will be regulated, and likely that the majority of animals will not be stunned prior to slaughter<sup>19</sup>.

Municipal slaughterhouses are common in most Indian states, and these typically serve larger, more commercial operations, or traders to whom those operating backyard and small holdings may sell livestock due to an inability to connect to markets themselves<sup>6,19</sup>. In 2013, the number of municipal slaughterhouses in India exceeded 900, and these collectively slaughtered around 31 million buffalo throughout the year<sup>6</sup>. The slaughter of ovine and caprine animals is less common in municipal facilities as their meat products tend to serve local markets, and comparatively little is exported<sup>19</sup>. While the slaughter of livestock is better regulated in municipal slaughterhouses than in backyard and local butchering facilities, it has been noted that many municipal slaughterhouses are outdated and in relatively poor states of repair<sup>19</sup>. Additionally, many amenities common in more modern slaughterhouses (e.g. lairages, drainage, lighting) are often missing or poorly maintained<sup>19</sup>. Many local and state governments are, however, investing in the construction of new municipal slaughter facilities, or upgrading existing facilities<sup>19</sup>.

Informal slaughter facilities and municipal slaughterhouses account for most of the livestock slaughter in India. Some larger, export-orientated organisations have invested in the production of integrated slaughter and meat packing plants, and these facilities are, in general, the most modern and efficient slaughter facilities in India, using practices that are subject to more rigorous inspection<sup>19</sup>. While more of these facilities have opened in India in recent years, most livestock is slaughtered elsewhere, especially those livestock species that serve domestic rather than international markets<sup>19</sup>.

It should be noted that, although the slaughter of cows is banned across the majority of India, illegal slaughter remains an issue despite a recent attempt by federal and state governments to ensure their widespread closure. The State of Uttar Pradesh is important to both the meat and leather industries in India, and the issue of illegal slaughterhouses in Uttar Pradesh is one that has become highly politicised since 2017.

With regards to legislative requirements, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1960) necessitates that "unnecessary pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is eliminated in the pre-slaughter stages as far as possible, and animals are killed; wherever necessary, in as humane a manner as possible"<sup>10</sup>.





## HIDES, SKIN & LEATHER

The Indian population has a low meat consumption in comparison to the majority of the world, at around 1.8kg of beef/capita/year (compared to 18kg in the UK and 36kg in the US)<sup>23</sup>.

The leather industry in India is significant, among the country's top ten exports according to revenue, employing 3.5 million people (including in footwear and leather goods production) and generating around USD12 billion in revenue<sup>24</sup>. In 2014 India produced 51.3 million bovine hides (the most of any country), 90.4 million goat skins (the 2nd greatest quantity of any country, behind China) and 37.6 million sheep skins (the 2nd greatest quantity of any country, behind China)<sup>24</sup>. This accounts for 13% of global bovine hide production, 18% of global goat skin production and 6% of global sheep skin production. India produces around 10% of global leather production at around 2 billion ft<sup>2</sup> per year<sup>25</sup>.

The state of Tamil Nadu contains around 60% of India's tanning capacity, and around 6% of global leather is produced in Tamil Nadu's 800 operational tanneries<sup>25</sup>. Within Tamil Nadu, the majority of leather production is undertaken in the Vellore District which comprises Ambur, Pernambut, Ranipet and Vaniyambadi, and this district produces around 36% of India's annual output of leather<sup>25</sup>. Other significant locations to the Indian leather industry include Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh), Bangalore (Karnataka), Jalandhar (Punjab) and Kolkata (West Bengal)<sup>26</sup>.

It is estimated that there as many as 2,000 tanneries in India employing approximately 300,000 people. Many of these facilities are small to medium-sized operations<sup>26</sup>.

There are currently 108 Leather Working Group certified facilities operating in India<sup>27</sup>.

The annual production of footwear in India is approximately 2 billion pairs, the majority of which are not made of leather and are consumed locally. Around 200 million pairs are exported on an annual basis<sup>25</sup>. Excepting footwear, India exports a significant quantity of products and goods that are derived from leather, and of this around 37% is luggage, 27% is apparel, 18% is tanned equine and bovine hides, and 7% is tanned goat skins<sup>9</sup>. With regards to tanned equine and bovine hides and tanned goat skins, most was exported to China, Hong Kong and Italy<sup>9</sup>. In 2017, India imported around US\$ 500 million tanned equine and bovine hides, of which 16% originated from Italy, 9% from Argentina and 9% from Thailand<sup>9</sup>. As a result, it is possible that some finished leather goods purchased from India originate from animals raised elsewhere. Similarly, by exporting a significant quantity of leather in a tanned state, it is possible that leather products sources from countries such as China, Hong Kong and Italy originate from animals raised and slaughtered in India.



## LEGISLATION & REGULATION

Matters of animal welfare are governed by both federal and state legislation. With regards to federal legislation, the primary legislative reference is the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1960), which makes it an offence to treat bovine, ovine, caprine or porcine animals in a "cruel" manner<sup>10</sup>. The legislation establishes broad definitions of how cruelty is defined in this context, and what is prescribed covers general animal husbandry as well as specific practices such as transport, slaughter and draught<sup>10</sup>. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1960) does not, however, establish specific requirements to which practices must adhere. Additional legislation such as the Rules for the Transportation of Animals (1978) and Central Motor Vehicles Amendment Rules (2015) provide additional requirements, however there is evidence to suggest that noncompliance is common.

A draft 'Animal Welfare Act' was published by the Animal Welfare Board of India in 2011. Although it improves welfare provisions considerably beyond the current 1960 Act, it has yet to be passed into law<sup>28</sup>.





The slaughter of cows is banned or restricted in the majority of India's 29 states, and prosecutions can lead to jail terms stretching several years depending on the state in which the animal was slaughtered<sup>29</sup>. A federal ban on the sale of cattle for slaughter (a move aimed at preventing cruelty towards animals and curbing illegal trade and smuggling of animals) was passed in 2017, however was later overturned by India's Supreme Court<sup>30</sup>.

In addition to restrictions placed on the slaughter of cows, the state of Maharashtra has passed additional legislation in which a cow, bull or bullock may not be slaughtered within the state if the animal holds any value for milk production or agricultural work. A person must not have possession of the hides of cow, bull or bullock (regardless of whether the animal was slaughtered within the state) and must never sell or transport an animal out of the state with the intention of that animal being slaughtered elsewhere<sup>31</sup>.

Some local customs involving cattle provoke criticism within India and internationally. Jallikattu (bull-taming) is performed in Tamil Nadu and involves practices that would be perceived as cruel in many parts of the world<sup>32</sup>.

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## GOVERNANCE

For the purpose of this report, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index is used as a means of assessing the extent to which nations are diligently governed. Information on governance is subjective; therefore, some information presented is anecdotal and provided for guidance only. India is ranked as the 78th least corrupt country globally, alongside Ghana, Turkey and Lesotho. Based on this ranking, it can be suggested that there is a relatively high level of corruption within India<sup>33</sup>.

Federal and state-level legislation covers a range of potential animal welfare sensitivities such as those related to husbandry, draught, transport and slaughter. While the extent to which legislation is enforced remains unclear, there is evidence to suggest that the required standards are frequently ignored, especially in more rural and informal settings.

Since 2017, there has been a growing effort by federal and state authorities to ensure the closure of India's illegal slaughterhouses<sup>34,35</sup>.

Some governance is provided by volunteers who have been nominated by NGOs to become animal welfare officers, appointed to support compliance.

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## NGO ACTIVITY

In recent years the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations (FIAPO) was formed as an umbrella group aimed at bringing together the scores of disparate local animal protection organisations across the country. FIAPO has a strong interest in the issue of illegal slaughter of goats and has already launched projects to strengthen enforcement by working closely with local officials in key cities<sup>36</sup>.

The welfare of cows receives a significant amount of attention from animal welfare NGOs operating in India including, among others, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)<sup>37</sup>. PETA has run a number of campaigns that demonstrate instances of animals being subjected to poor conditions, and PETA has also run on campaigns focused on the dairy industry in India<sup>37</sup>. PETA has a global reach, and often uses inflammatory language when discussing leather.

In addition to PETA, there are several other prominent NGOs focused on matters of animal welfare in India. These include:

IDA India (In Defence of Animals). Formed the Compassionate Children's Club to educate children on animal welfare practices, and to increase knowledge on how to adequately care for animals. The aim of this scheme is to increase awareness of the needs of animals and improve welfare standards<sup>38</sup>.

Visakha Society for Protection and Care of Animals (VSPCA). Holds the authority to seize animals from a person if they have reason to believe that the animals are being mistreated. Volunteers often work to ensure that transport legislation is adhered to. The volunteers may contact VSPCA to report cases of perceived mistreatment<sup>39</sup>.

Stray Relief and Animal Welfare (STRAW). An NGO focused on teaching humane education to individuals. This function to reduce cruelty and encourage people to treat animals with compassion and care<sup>40</sup>.



## FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES

There are currently no established farm assurance or certification projects based on welfare within India.

The Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) was established in 2014 to promote the development and conservation of India's indigenous bovine species<sup>41</sup>. Specifically, RGM comprises two schemes: the National Programme for Bovine Breeding (NPBB), and the National Mission on Bovine Productivity (NMBP), which will target improvements in milk yield, improve the genetics of the national bovine herd, and reduce the risk of, and vulnerability to, disease<sup>41,42</sup>. While no measure is explicit in attempting to implement improved animal welfare, improvements in animal health will, by extension, lead to improvements in animal welfare.

With regards to the productivity of dairy production, a National Action Plan for the dairy industry began in 2016 with targets to increase national milk production to 254.55 million tonnes by 2021 – 2022 (in 2016 production was 163 million tonnes), and to double the income of dairy farmers by 2021 – 2022<sup>43,44</sup>. A variety of specific measures are being delivered in order to achieve these targets, including investments in genetic improvements, infrastructural investments, and monetary incentives for those farmers that engage with more modern farming methods<sup>43,44</sup>.

The control and eradication of disease in livestock has become an increasingly important issue to policymakers, and several animal health programmes have emerged as a result. Diseases such as foot-and-mouth and rinderpest are being specifically targeted on a national scale, and additional efforts are being made to ensure that diseases are prevented from entering India (e.g. additional quarantine and certification requirements of imported products), and to provide additional training and support to those responsible for governing and controlling animal diseases at state level<sup>45</sup>.

An absence of reliable sources makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness of these schemes thus far, however the challenge in improving standards in the rearing of livestock in India relates to changing practices undertaken by the millions of small-scale and backyard operations undertaken in rural areas.

The most notable certification scheme appears to be the 'National Programme for Organic Production'. This scheme provides a policy document to outline the criteria that a farmer must meet to be certified as organic<sup>46</sup>.



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