WUR starts database for sustainable livestock farming

Hannah van Zanten wants to bring together data sets from the FAO, research institutes, food companies and farmers.

How many cows, pigs, chickens and sheep are there in the various countries of the world? What do these farm animals eat, and how much protein do they actually need? These are the kinds of questions that Hannah van Zanten, a researcher at Farming Systems Ecology, wants to answer. 'Then you see that the FAO (the UN's Food

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and Agriculture Organization, ed.) has a lot of data on animal numbers, but not on something like their nutritional needs. You'll get that information more easily from breeding or animal feed companies.' Van Zanten wants

to bring that data together in a global database that will be published online so that anyone can consult it.

'It's a hobby that's got out of control,' laughs Van Zanten. 'Together with Renée Cardinaals, a researcher at Farm Systems Ecology, I study the circularity of global food systems, and we need data on animals for that. Such data are often missing or are out of date, so we drew up an online survey. We now have 50,000 email addresses of companies and researchers that have data on livestock animals.'

But 50,000 addresses are not enough, says Van Zanten. 'We need data from all around the world, not just on terrestrial animals but also on fish in aquaculture. We are dealing with a huge range of production systems in different regions.'

There is more information on www.circularfoodsystems.org. AS

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