

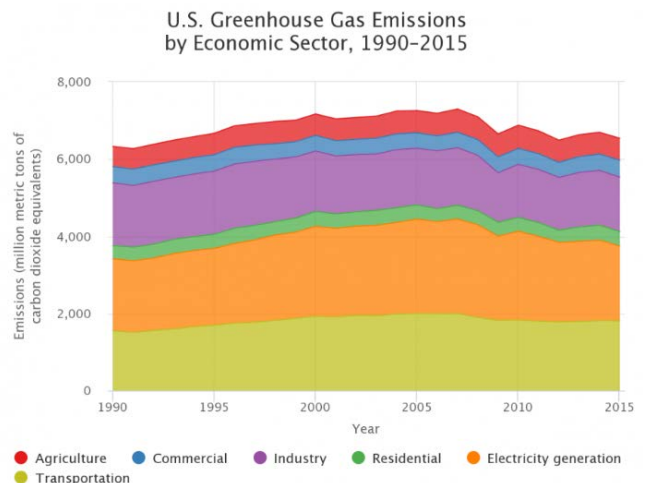
## Cattle Business in Mississippi – September 2017 “Beef Production Strategies” article Stewardship

Cobie Rutherford – Extension Beef Cattle Instructor, Mississippi State University

If you missed the Stockmanship and Stewardship program we had in Starkville, you missed a great opportunity to learn from some of our industry's best stockmen and researchers. All the speakers were very informative, the demonstrations were outstanding, and we had really good food. In recent *Cattle Business in Mississippi* articles, Dr. Huston, Dr. Karisch, and I have independently discussed cattle handling and stockmanship. In this month's article wanted to focus just a little on environmental stewardship.

We've all heard the phrases: cattleman are stewards of the land and agriculturalists are the original environmentalists. Our parents and grandparents instilled in us the values to leave the land better for the next generation. All in all, cattle producers do a really good job of caring for their natural resources. After all, doesn't performance in our calves begin with soil health? As environmental issues like global warming (if that exists) and food waste have become mainstream media's topic of choice for slow news days, some want to point blame at production agriculture. It's important for cattle producers to stay abreast of top industry issues.

Some anti-agriculture/environmental activists claim that cattle are major contributors to global warming. We know cattle and other ruminants produce the greenhouse gas, methane. This gas is also emitted from landfills as organic material breaks down. The EPA has estimated that methane only makes up 10% of the total amount of greenhouse gases. Based on the EPA's Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks report, agriculture only contributes 9% of America's Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Compared to transportation and electricity generation, agriculture's contribution is small. Research has shown that the beef industry is making great strides in environmental sustainability, from 2005 to 2011 the overall environmental impact of beef production decreased by 7%.



Did you know that 40% of the food produced in the United States is thrown in the garbage? While consumers are particular savvy with their meat products, if beef waste was cut in half, the sustainability of our industry would improve by 10%. Waste is huge problem. By making products such as lean, finely textured beef, we can utilize more product. By following BQA guidelines and making our cattle the right size for the “consumer window of acceptability” we can decrease waste substantially.

Changing public perception about the beef industry's impact on the environment will be difficult, but science backs up claims that the U.S. Cattle Industry is not a major cause of global warming. I think we can all look at ways to reduce waste of beef products and select cattle that are optimum for consumer acceptability.

If you would like to contact me, my email address is [cobie.rutherford@msstate.edu](mailto:cobie.rutherford@msstate.edu) and phone number is [662-325-4344](tel:662-325-4344).

For more information about beef cattle production, contact an office of the Mississippi State University Extension Service or visit [extension.msstate.edu/beef](http://extension.msstate.edu/beef).