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NEWS RELEASE

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Recommendation: Fight Global Warming by Increasing Soil's Organic Matter

Albuquerque, NM. We can begin counteracting the effects of global warming if farmers and ranchers build up "the organic content of their farmlands," says Texas agricultural consultant Malcolm Beck. They can do so by using animal grazing techniques developed 25 years ago by the Albuquerque, New Mexico-based non-profit, Holistic Management International (HMI). Now being used on more than one million acres of land in the U.S., HMI's methods conserve and enhance the soil's organic content "in almost any weather condition."

Beck made these observations in the June issue of *Stockman Grassfarmer* magazine.

Beck noted that global warming has occurred because the earth's atmosphere is overloaded with huge amounts of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), released into the air by burning fossil fuels. Plants normally and naturally absorb CO₂, but modern agricultural practices and worldwide deforestation have severely reduced their ability to do so.

Before modern agricultural methods were introduced, "it is estimated that the organic content of the soil in this country was between 4 and 8 percent," says HMI's Executive Director, Shannon Horst. However, after we adopted excessive plowing, non-organic fertilizers and continuous grazing, "the organic content of soil fell significantly, in some estimations by at least 50%."

Horst points out that the grazing planning and management taught by HMI would help offset the effects of global warming because it focuses on keeping the soil covered and providing grasses with needed recovery periods. It has also been proven to reduce uses of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and large equipment that consumes fossil fuels.

When a protective cover remains over the soil, the soil's ability to trap moisture goes up, and this increases the microbial action essential to carbon sequestration. Erosion is reduced, plant roots absorb more water, flood damage is lessened, and healthy habitats are created that increase the diversity of native plant and wildlife species.

"In addition to all of these benefits," Horst says, "Ranchers using Holistic Management almost always have higher stocking rates and make more profit each year."

HMI is offering farmers and ranchers introductory weekend workshops in Albuquerque August 25-27 or November 3-5, and a yearlong "Range and Ranch Management Training Program" for farmers and ranchers beginning September 16.

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