

## **GRSB Newsletter Member Profile**

Name: Carlos Saviani

Title: Vice President of Sustainable Food

Company: World Wildlife Fund

**Q:** What do you do for the World Wildlife Fund?

**A:** *I am the Vice President of Sustainable Food for WWF-US, leading the organization's efforts on food sustainability of animal proteins, including beef, seafood and dairy products.*

**Q:** How did you get into this field? What is your background?

**A:** *I was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and as a child growing up in a big city, I had little to no contact with food production. I had an uncle who took me once to his partner's beautiful dairy, beef and horse farm in the countryside, and it was love at first sight. I never stopped going there for long holidays and vacations, and that's how I formed an appreciation of farming, nature, wildlife and animals. Those trips inspired me to study animal science, and that's how I got into food and agriculture.*

**Q:** Where did you go to school?

**A:** *I went to school at the University of Sao Paulo. I graduated at the top of my class in animal science and later complimented that with a marketing specialization at the University of Wisconsin, and an executive MBA from Business School Sao Paulo in partnership with the Rotman School of Business at the University of Toronto. More recently, I studied innovation and exponential technologies at Singularity University in California.*

**Q:** How long have you been with World Wildlife Fund?

**A:** *I've been a member and a WWF employee for almost two years. Throughout my career, I've led strategic marketing for multi-national companies involved in genetics and animal health, learning a great deal about the needs of the industry globally. I had the opportunity to engage with farmers, processors and retailers from all corners of the world, trying to understand the trends and challenges they face, and working to solve those by developing new solutions and products with the R&D and business development teams. I was looking for an opportunity to make a significant difference to help change the world and improve the food sector of sustainability. Although at that time I was not fully conscious of the meaning of the word "sustainability", I was working towards improving food sustainability without even knowing it. Interested in more than just making money, I've always been hungry to be involved in positive change and to leave something good behind for others. But I learned that some of those challenges cannot be solved by a single company and that the only way is to work effectively and pre-competitively with multiple players or even whole sectors and industries if you want to achieve changes at scale. So that's how I became interested in WWF and its market*

transformation initiative. As a leading NGO in this space, WWF has the people, experience, and capacity to bring together different interests needed for the challenge.

**Q:** Tell me about your work in sustainable beef.

**A:** A big portion of my background is in beef. I managed a beef ranch with 3,000 animals at the beginning of my career. I worked a lot with the beef sector in Brazil but also had the chance to work with it in different parts of the world. And beef, for sure, is a sector that WWF prioritizes because of all animal and plant proteins, beef has one of the largest environmental footprints. Yet when cattle are managed responsibly, they can help restore and maintain grasslands. It's really important for us to work within this industry, and we have several people around the world dedicated to promoting sustainable ranching and improving production outcomes. Across a variety of commodities, we are joining efforts with farmers and ranchers, processors and retailers, the scientific community, and policymakers to improve not only the environmental sustainability of this industry, but also its social and economic viability as well. We have been supporting the GRSB and its national roundtables around the world since their founding. We also have several initiatives and projects around the world related to ranching and beef production, including the [Sustainable Ranching Initiative](#) in the Northern Great Plains of the US, the [Collaboration for Forests and Agriculture](#) getting started in South America, and the [Pantanal Sustainable Beef](#) in Brazil.

**Q:** What does sustainability mean to you?

**A:** Sustainability means producing food within the planet's natural limits. It means taking fish out of the ocean in a way that allows them to reproduce and replenish their stocks. It means using water at a rate that allows ecosystems to recharge the water. It means emitting greenhouse gases at a low enough volume to keep our global temperature from crossing the 1.5 degree threshold as set in Paris. It means being able to plant seeds and remove food from the ground hundreds and thousands of times over and over while maintaining healthy soil. It means sustaining a food system that can last for many generations to come without destroying the natural, social and economic resources we need to make it happen. That includes the fragile equilibrium of ecosystems that support life on the planet. So in the more specific case of beef, I love the definition of sustainability from the GRSB – being environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable. I think that is really hitting the nail on the head when it comes to sustainability.

**Q:** What is sustainability in beef production, and why is it important to our future?

**A:** First of all, any food is important to the sustainability of the human race because we are growing not only in population but also in economic and social development. That is largely a good thing, but it also means that increased consumption per capita is also growing, which is putting stress on our food system. So it means people moving from low levels of nutrition, even starvation in many cases, to layers of society where they now can afford to buy more dense and nutritious food. This puts a huge pressure on our food system, not only for beef but for all foods.

*So probably in the next 30-40 years, we have to double the net food availability. As more people move into the middle class, they tend to eat more animal proteins. While poultry and pork have been growing faster than beef, there's still a growth of beef demand, especially in developing countries. It's important for society to guarantee that we can grow with that demand without destroying the planet and limiting our natural resources. We have to look at how beef is produced, and identify the gaps – what are the hot spots, opportunities and solutions to reduce its environmental footprint and to make it better for both social and economic sides. Then, we need to work on those areas to take improvements to scale so we can have a beef value chain that can be more sustainable moving forward.*

**Q:** What is the most important fact about sustainable beef that you want consumers to know?

**A:** *The existence of the rumen. To me the rumen is the most sustainable tool that nature created as it allows animals to digest fibers and absorb nutrients from grasses and turn them into protein for us. Monogastrics—animals with just one stomach—like us cannot do that.*

**Q:** What needs to be done to obtain sustainability in beef production? And, do you feel enough is being done to achieve this?

**A:** *I'm going to start by answering the second question. I think NOT enough has been done. And that's why we formed a roundtable around sustainable beef. That's why WWF and many other organizations and companies are getting together to work on this topic. And, we are just starting, there's much to be done.*

*To answer the first question, we are NEVER going to achieve a sustainability point because sustainability is a journey, not a destination. It demands a continuous effort.*

*We need to work on continuous improvements. We have climate change. We have a lot of wild and marginal spaces that animals call home, but are being transitioned for crops, urban development or other uses. So the world is always changing. The dynamic is always changing. The planet, society and economy are always changing. In rural areas, if you ask a beef rancher what's their biggest challenge when it comes to sustainability, they may say: "finding the person who is going to run this farm after I'm gone because my kids are not interested and the employees are moving to the city." Labor is a big issue today. Maybe in a few years people will start to get tired of living in the big cities and will try to find a place back in rural areas.*

*Sustainability is an evolving thing because the world is evolving. That's why it's important we work on continuous improvement of the three aspects of sustainability, prioritizing the most important issues (the "hot spots") depending of the location, developing metrics to measure where we are today and setting goals for improvement.*

**Q:** Why did you decide to become a member of GRSB?

**A:** Because of WWF's focus on beef and food sustainability and the importance of GRSB's initiative on beef. It's where we are putting a great deal of time and energy. The GRSB, together with the national roundtables, is the only initiative that can really promote change at scale—not by doing everything themselves but by providing the framework, the principles, criteria, indicators and the metrics, the guidance, information and leadership to its members and stakeholders so THEY can implement sustainability in their companies, farms and supply chains.

**Q:** How are you involved in the organization?

**A:** WWF is deeply involved. We have team members actively participating as board members, members of the executive teams, members of the working groups in Brazil, Canada and the U.S., and also in other countries trying to get new national roundtables formed. I work on the executive team of the GRSB as vice president along with Ian McConnel who is our board member.

**Q:** Is there anything else you'd like to add about WWF or your efforts?

**A:** The most important thing I'd like to say is that we are all in this because we truly believe that making beef more sustainable is viable but we face huge challenges ahead. The planet is in jeopardy, and we believe that there's a way to prevent the worst from happening. But we really have to work on improving the sustainability of food production with a huge sense of urgency, moving forward in the continuous improvement process ASAP. Otherwise, the whole food industry will also be in jeopardy, led by beef. We have seen examples around the world where sustainability is possible, and we are working to document them in business cases to prove that these can be followed successfully. But, we need the engagement of everyone in the industry. So if I could send out a message, it would be a call for engagement. We need more players. We need more people. We need more active members from the beef value chain being part of this initiative, supporting it, making commitments and actively working to implement them just like some of the GRSB members are doing. If we want to find, develop and protect this sweet spot where beef and the planet can coexist, we will need full engagement from the beef industry as a whole. We are not there yet.