

Qualitative Content Analysis of News Coverage About Meat and Livestock Australia's Carbon Neutral 2030 Initiative

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Introduction

- In November 2017, Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) – the research and development corporation for Australia's red meat industry – set the commitment for Australia to become the world's first carbon neutral red meat industry by 2030 (Crowley, 2022) in an initiative referred to as CN2030 or CN30.
- Achieving carbon neutrality will not only help the environment, but also solidify the quality and integrity of Australian red meat (MLA, 2020).
- This effort is also aimed at improving consumers' opinion of the environmental footprint of red meat as Australian consumers are becoming increasingly aware and critical of the environmental impacts of the food they consume (Red Meat Advisory Council, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

- Framing communications can help shape the opinion of the intended audience (Steede et al., 2020), specifically when it comes to contentious issues.
- Climate change is often under framing scrutiny due to its highly politicized nature within the press (Effrosynidis et al., 2022).
- Framing has been applied to climate change and climate mitigation strategies across the world (Orton, 2021; Wang & Altiparmak, 2022), but not carbon neutrality from an Australian perspective.

Purpose & Research Questions

To explore how MLA's CN30 initiative was presented in Australian newspapers.

- 1) What types of articles included coverage about the initiative?
- 2) What emergent frames existed in that coverage?

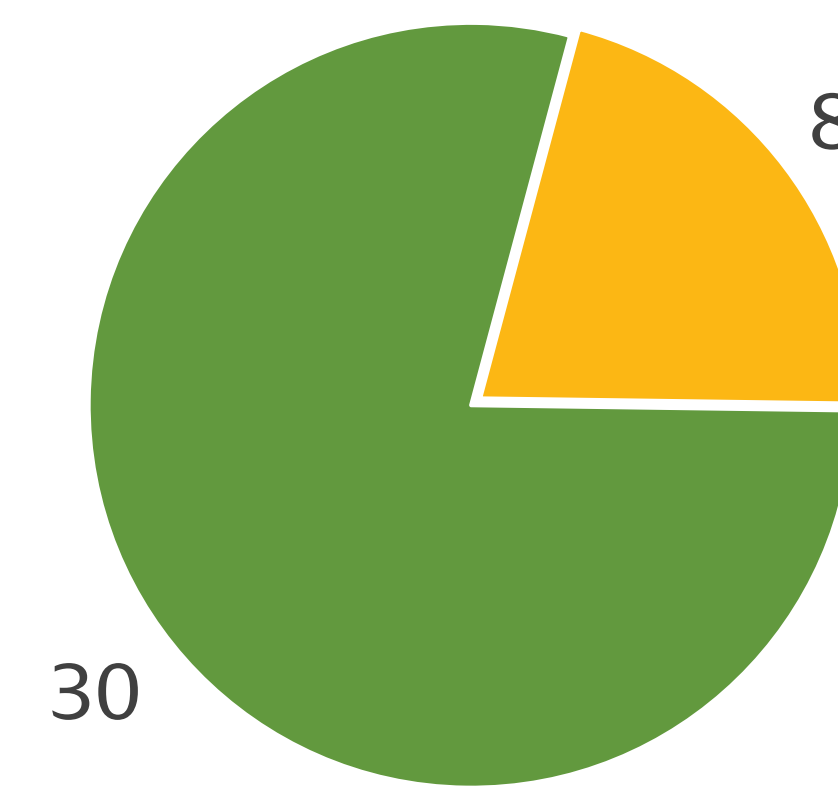


Methods

- Qualitative content analysis of Australian newspaper articles collected using the Australia & New Zealand Newsstream database.
- Searched for articles published from 2017-2022 that included one of the following keywords: Meat & Livestock Australia or MLA and CN2030, CN30, or carbon neutral.
- 51 articles were retrieved. After duplicate articles were removed, 38 articles were available for qualitative analysis.
- Two coders independently read each article and made notes regarding the emergent frame in reference to how the CN30 initiative was addressed in the article then they discussed the articles to reach agreement regarding the emergent frames.

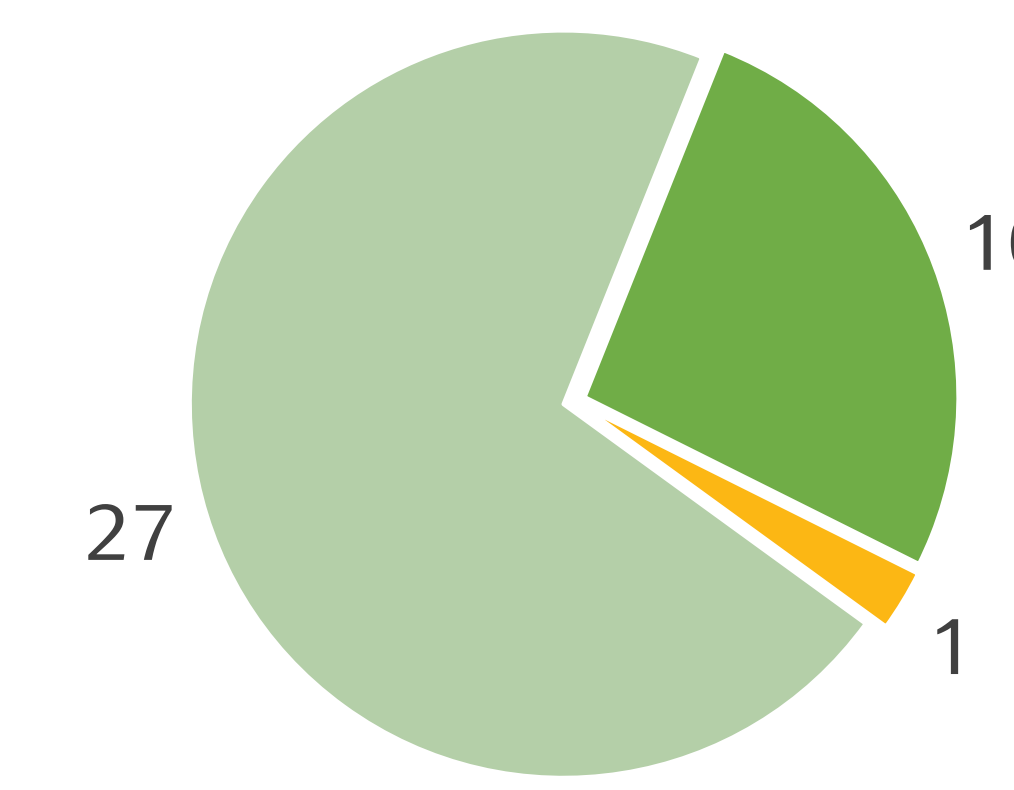
Results

Source of Articles



■ Mainstream Media ■ Agricultural Media

Article Type



■ News ■ Feature ■ Opinion

Emergent Frames



Commitment to reaching the goal 12 articles

- Discussed the CN30 initiative as an example of the industry's commitment to reaching carbon neutrality, but often did not provide specific details about how that is being done.
- Often highlighted Australian agricultural companies ensuring they were doing their part to reduce their carbon footprint.



Pathways to reaching the goal 11 articles

- Drew attention to the CN30 initiatives currently underway such as commercialization of red asparagopsis, soil carbon, and identifying genetic markers.
- Connected the CN30 initiative to other efforts to address sustainability concerns in the red meat industry, specifically about methane production.



Announcing the "ambitious" plan 8 articles

- Released early in the study's timeframe to share news of the CN30 initiative.
- Specifically labeled the plan as "ambitious" and generated more recognition of the industry's efforts.



CN30's contribution to other efforts 3 articles

- Positioned CN30 within a larger framework of initiatives aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



Skepticism about the plan 2 articles

- Challenged the achievability of the CN30 plan.



Initiative's relevance to dietary choices 2 articles

- Questioned how the production of red meat as a protein choice may impact climate change.

Discussion & Conclusions

- While articles at the beginning of the study's timeframe focused on announcing the "ambitious" plan, content about the CN30 initiative eventually became more varied with frames highlighting specific strategies to reach the goal and using the initiative as evidence of the red meat industry's broader commitment to address climate change.
- How content is framed, particularly about contentious issues such as climate change, can influence how people interpret that information and form opinions (Effrosynidis et al., 2022; Wang & Altiparmak, 2022).
- While the CN30 initiative had some criticism, it was predominantly presented as a positive endeavor and shared as evidence of the red meat industry's dedication to addressing climate change.

Recommendation

- Future research should include a larger dataset to explore how other sustainable agricultural practice campaigns are being presented through media coverage.

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