

**09** SEPT

ONLINE DEBATE



# **SMALLER, GREENER ...HEALTHIER?**

LIVESTOCK FARMING IN EUROPE:  
WHAT DOES SUSTAINABILITY LOOK LIKE?



# SMALLER, GREENER ...HEALTHIER?

## LIVESTOCK FARMING IN EUROPE: WHAT DOES SUSTAINABILITY LOOK LIKE?

As Europe forms its strategies to deliver on the EU Green Deal's goals of net-zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, restoring biodiversity, and moving to a clean, circular economy, our debate will focus on the future of the livestock sector in Europe and what sustainability entails for animal-source food production.

Farmers have a responsibility to focus on sustainable management practices and to promote biodiversity while producing enough food for the population. And it's on the animal healthcare sector to provide the vaccines, digital tools and medicines that protect animal wellbeing and support farmers in their drive for sustainable practices. We want to help all farmers working in all kinds of farming systems to focus on raising animals in a more environmentally sustainable way – without having to worry about the health of their livestock.



**Roxane Feller**

AnimalhealthEurope's  
Secretary General



THE VOICE  
OF THE ANIMAL  
MEDICINES INDUSTRY

# Programme

Introduction of speakers and  
debate topic

Opening speech

**The EU Green Deal and its Farm to  
Fork Strategy: What role for animal  
health?**

Moderator:

**Dave Keating**

Journalist

**Stella Kyriakides**

European Commissioner for Health and  
Food Safety

## Panel debate

**Livestock farming in Europe: What does sustainability look like?**

Debate kick-off speech

**Norbert Lins**

MEP & COM AGRI Chair

Panel debate and Q&A session

**Jude Capper**

Livestock Sustainability Consultant

**Kurt Sannen**

Organics Europe

**Martin Scholten**

Wageningen University

**Julie Vermooten**

AnimalhealthEurope



**Dave Keating** is the Brussels correspondent for international cable news network France 24. He is an American journalist who has been covering EU politics for 14 years, previously as editor of EuropeanVoice.com, a side publication of The Economist. Before arriving in Brussels, Dave covered the boardrooms of London, the halls of the US Congress in Washington, the cafes of Paris, the museums of Berlin, the courtrooms of Chicago and the streets of New York City. Dave has a Bachelor of Arts in European History from New York University and a Masters of Science in Journalism from Northwestern University.

# Stella Kyriakides

European Commissioner  
on Health and Food Safety



## Bio

Stella Kyriakides worked as a clinical psychologist in the Mental Health Services of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Cyprus in the area of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry from 1979–2006. Special areas of interest and training were Pediatric oncology and Child sexual abuse.

In 2006, she was elected to the Cyprus Parliament and was re-elected in 2011 and 2016 for the Democratic Rally party of which she was the Vice-President. At the House of Representatives, she was the Chair of the Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, Vice Chair of the Committee on Health Affairs and a member of the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs.

In 2012, she was appointed Head of the Cyprus Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). She served as Representative of the PACE at the Venice Commission, as Chair of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, as chair of the Sub-Committee on Children and as PACE General Rapporteur for the Child. In 2017 she was elected President of the PACE, thus becoming the 30th President of the Assembly.

She founded the First Breast Cancer advocacy organisation in Cyprus, Europa Donna Cyprus where she served as President from 2000–2015. She was also President of the European Breast Cancer Coalition Europa Donna.

She received many awards in recognition of her relentless efforts and work in support of women's rights, children and patients' rights and had numerous publications, research contributions/articles on children related matters and cancer in Cyprus and other European countries.

On 1st December 2019 Ms. Kyriakides became the European Commissioner on Health and Food Safety.

## Thoughts on the matter

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown more than ever the importance of the One Health approach recognizing that animal, human and environmental health are interdependent. The fact that recent epidemics, from Ebola to Sars to West Nile virus, are zoonotic has important implications for our farming practices. It also shows – more than ever – that animal health matters.

These outbreaks raise awareness of the links between our own health and the health of our ecosystems. The Green Deal and especially the Biodiversity and Farm to Fork strategy provide tools and targets to address the current imbalance.

# Norbert Lins

MEP & COM AGRI Chair



## Bio

Norbert Lins MEP has been the Chair of the Committee on Agricultural and Rural Development (AGRI) since July 2019.

He was first elected as a member of European Parliament in 2014, where he was a member of the AGRI Committee and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI Committee). Lins grew up and helped on a family-run dairy farm in Baden-Wurtemberg in Southern Germany, close to Lake Constance. Hence he knows first-hand the situation of farmers keeping livestock.

He holds a Master degree in “European Administrative Management” from the University of Applied Sciences in Ludwisburg and Kehl, Germany. Working in the regional administration in Tübingen from 2009–2010 as a consultant for promotion of broadband, being an assistant to the Minister of Agriculture in the Ministry of Rural Affairs and Consumer Protection (MLR) in Baden-Wurtemberg from 2010–2011 and later on working in the MLR until being elected as an MEP, agriculture and rural development were always at the heart of his work.

## Thoughts on the matter

One of the aspects of the European Commission’s Farm to Fork Strategy is to make the livestock sector more sustainable and to improve animal welfare and animal health. The transformation of production methods to deliver better climate and environmental results or the 50% reduction of the sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals until 2030 are very challenging tasks for the livestock sector.

From a Parliament’s point of view, we have to make sure that these tasks are formulated in a realistic way and supported by all actors in the “Farm to Fork”. Openness for change on the producers’ side must include appreciation on the consumers’ side. We have to give farmers the tools to keep their livestock healthy while at the same time giving them the financial and legal means to contribute to the goals of the Green Deal.

The Farm to Fork strategy includes very ambitious targets. While agriculture in Europe is willing to deliver, politicians have to pay attention to how we want to achieve them and farmers should be rewarded accordingly for raising animals in a more environmentally sustainable way.

# Jude Capper

Livestock Sustainability  
Consultant



## Bio

Jude is a Livestock Sustainability Consultant based in Oxfordshire. Jude's research focuses on modeling the sustainability of livestock production systems, specifically dairy and beef. She is also currently working on projects relating to farm medicines use and the impacts of livestock health and welfare on system sustainability. Jude's professional goal is to communicate factors affecting livestock industry sustainability to enhance the knowledge and understanding of food production stakeholders. She sits on the National Beef Association board, has an active social media presence and spends a considerable amount of time de-bunking some of the more commonly-heard myths relating to livestock production. To this end, she was awarded the Women in Dairy "Dairy Industry Woman of the Year 2017" and the Farmers Guardian "Farming Hero of the Year 2018" awards. Associate Membership of the Royal Agricultural Society was conferred upon Jude in 2018.

## Thoughts on the matter

Sustainable livestock farming is one of the most commonly discussed issues within agriculture. Myriad definitions of sustainability exist, the most widely-accepted being a balance between environmental responsibility, economic viability and social acceptability. With regards to livestock farming, the social component has become disproportionately important, as consumers increasingly query how their food is produced, although, the degree to which different livestock systems are considered sustainable depends on the region, culture, market and metric of choice.

From an environmental perspective, improvements in livestock genetics, nutrition, management and health have allowed for significant yield gains in many regions, with reductions in both resource use and greenhouse gas emissions per unit of meat, milk or eggs over the past century. Economies of size, whereby dairy cattle in large herds exhibit increased milk yields, or a greater proportion of beef cattle reach their intended slaughter weight in feedlot operations, mean that from an efficiency perspective, "bigger" is often better. However, the historical efficiency gains that conferred environmental benefits have not been equally valued by the consumer – by contrast, food is criticized for being "cheap". This has led to a small segment of consumers buying food produced in niche systems, e.g. organic, grass-fed or heirloom breeds. These often command higher prices per unit of food produced and are assumed to be more environmentally-friendly than intensive systems, yet the reality is more complex.

Animal health is one of the key determinants of sustainability, with over 20% of global animal protein lost to disease, according to the World Organisation for Animal Health. Livestock producers have a moral responsibility to optimise animal health and welfare; consumers want to be reassured that the milk, meat and eggs that they buy come from healthy livestock; and healthy animals are more productive, therefore improved health improves all three facets of sustainability. In addition, improved health reduces the risk of public health issues and the need for veterinary medicines – a significant advantage given the threat of antimicrobial resistance to both animal and human health. It is impossible to prescribe a single sustainable system, set of management practices, livestock species or size of operation either on a regional or global basis. In light of growing consumer interest in food production however, the livestock industry must adopt a culture of continuous improvement; successfully manage and enhance animal health; and communicate its dedication to improving sustainability.

# Kurt Sannen

Organics Europe



## Bio

Kurt Sannen is the Chair of the Organics Europe Farmers Interest Group bringing together representatives from organic farmer associations across Europe. He organises and leads meetings of Organics Europe farmers and ensures the link between the Brussels office and members.

Working in the agri-food and environmental protection sectors for over 20 years, Kurt was successively advisor for the Cabinet of the Flemish Minister of Environment and Agriculture, Project Manager at the Government Agency for Nature and Forest Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos and organic farmer. Currently based in Diest, Belgium, his organic farm Bolhuis counts cattle of local breed (Kempisch Roodbont) and sheeps, that play an important role in the maintenance of grasslands.

Since 2012, Kurt is active within Bioforum Vlaanderen vzw, the umbrella organization for organic agriculture and food in Flanders. He is now the chairman of this member-based organization. He has extensive experience of working with farmers and other stakeholders, as well as EU and national policymakers on agriculture and rural development policies.

## Thoughts on the matter

Livestock grazing is essential for the management of important wildlife habitats, such as grasslands. Moreover, livestock help closing and optimizing the nutrient cycle, a system in which nutrients are recycled internally. This concept is key, especially in organic farming where the farm is considered as an organism. Nevertheless, at the global level 80% of agricultural land is dedicated to animal production (including feed) while it provides only 17% of global calories (it takes 4 to 11 vegetal calories to produce 1 calorie of meat). Livestock represents 14.5% of global GHG emissions. We need to rethink the system, especially in Europe where diets are too rich in animal products. The main challenge is to ensure that everyone has access to healthy food, here and in the South, without negative impacts on the climate and the environment.

The EU needs a clear strategy for the development of vegetable proteins; today we remain largely dependent on imports, which have a huge environmental impact such as deforestation. Protein-rich plants such as soybean and legumes are often used in the rotations in organic farming as they have the capacity to fix the nitrogen in the soil. But despite these benefits, the CAP does not incentivize enough the cultivation of vegetable proteins (today only in greening and coupled support).

The Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies provide a clear direction and represent a first step in this direction, including for livestock farming. Organics Europe welcomes the different targets on chemical pesticides, fertilizers and antimicrobial reduction, and the specific target of 25% of agricultural land under organic farming by 2030. We believe that the Farm to Fork strategy should use the push-pull approach to increase both organic land and consumption of organic products in Europe. The CAP has to provide the necessary remuneration for the benefits of organic conversion and maintenance through existing rural development policies or innovative tools like eco-schemes. And at the national level, Member States should integrate targets for organic land as part of their CAP strategic plans.

# Martin Scholten

Wageningen University



## Bio

Dr. Martin.C.Th. Scholten is principle advisor European Affairs of the Executive Board of Wageningen University & Research (WUR). From 2008 – 2020 he was WuR Board of Director General WUR Animal Sciences. He was the first president of the European public–private livestock innovation platform “Animal Task Force”; and cochair of the Livestock Research Group of the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases.

As an ecologist by background, he introduced a.o. the principles of “Feeding the World within the Carrying Capacity of Planet Earth”; “Livestock Farming with Care”, “A circular food production in a bio based society”, “Zoonotic Emergency Preparedness & Interventions”. He is advisor to the Dutch Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality contributing to the vision “Agriculture, nature and food: valuable and connected – The Netherlands as a leader in circular agriculture” and the vision on dealing with the critical nitrogen deposition that harms the quality of nature in the Netherlands.

## Thoughts on the matter

The main driver for future sustainability in food production is resource security by nature based resource efficiency, based on the principles of circularity. That implies optimization of the use of fertilizers and feed produced from residual biomass in a biobased society.

From this perspective, the role of livestock is: 1) to convert non–food biomass in nutritious food, and 2) to produce circular, natural fertilizers produced from manure. In this role livestock will also provide agroecological services.

The European livestock production systems should be transformed to this role, which means customized feeding regimes, more resilient breeds, and smart manure management. In a circular food production system diversity of livestock production practices is essential, as well as adaptation to local circumstances to ensure connected circularity.

A simple one–dimensional reduction of the livestock numbers in the food system will not be as effective to achieve a more sustainable food production as a transition of the role of livestock.

A critical aspect to consider, however, is the animal welfare and resilience based preventive animal health from a One Health perspective, in a Zoonotic Emergency strategy of preparedness and intervention.



# Julie Vermooten

AnimalhealthEurope



## Bio

Julie started her career in European Public Affairs in 1995 with the Dutch Productboards for Livestock, Meat and Eggs. After 3 years of active lobbying for agricultural interests, she was appointed to the French Business Confederation MEDEF as special advisor for Europe. She focused on advocating French interests with members of the European Parliament for over 10 years. In 2008, Julie joined Cosmetics Europe, the Personal care association, as Public Affairs Director. Cosmetics Europe represents 4000 companies through national cosmetics federations from all EU Member States and 18 international leading companies. From there she moved to the practical business world, to manage a Belgian start up, World Natural Care, putting in place a production building and all necessary processes to develop and produce natural ingredients for efficient organic cosmetics. In 2016, Julie was attracted back to the Brussels Bubble and took on the challenge to set up the European Public Policy Department for MSD Animal Health.

Julie Vermooten holds a Master's degree in Animal Husbandry and agri-business management from Wageningen University and Research centre in the Netherlands. Julie was born in Mbabane, eSwatini in 1968 and commutes between Paris, France and Brussels, Belgium. She has two children and is a fanatic Mah Jong player on top of diving, skiing and tennis.

## Thoughts on the matter

Animal health matters on all farms. Good animal health plays an important role, not only for animal welfare, but in protecting public health as well as the health of our environment. It is important to reduce health risks where possible. That's why we believe that taking a holistic approach to animal husbandry, ensuring more harmonious human-animal-environment interactions in line with One Health thinking, is a positive approach. At this moment in time, it is important we take stock for a moment and recognise the great efforts we have already made to move toward sustainable food production in Europe. This will certainly encourage farmers, and those who work alongside them, to promote the different positive actions already being taken across Europe, and to build upon these strong foundations.

There is not one sole example of a farming system that will deliver optimally on all three pillars of sustainability. The animal health industry believes that sustainable livestock production systems are those where there are regular veterinary visits, good animal health management plans with use of preventive vaccines where possible, good biosecurity measures and housing, appropriate nutrition and careful attention to animal well-being, on both a group and individual basis.

This means Europe should include all farming practices in its support measures, from agroecology or organic, to sustainable intensification. Actions to produce enough food for the increasing global population on existing farmland, while preserving surrounding lands and the biodiversity those lands support is the goal post. This means promoting the use of detection and animal disease prevention tools, supporting deployment of new agricultural techniques, incentivising improved biosecurity, increasing monitoring and surveillance, and improving animal disease preparedness.

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