

Food and Farming: well-fed or fed up?

Brussels, 6 June 2019; Ensuring sustainable food production is one of the greatest challenges of our time, and current conversations indicate a breach of confidence in our food systems and confusion over healthy diets. A highly urbanised population and an array of opinions on social media are helping to drive a disconnect between food choices and knowledge of production practices and nutritious values, which some warn may have a detrimental effect on health.

Such were the meaty topics up for discussion at AnimalhealthEurope's annual event, which gathered the livestock food chain along with consumer, animal welfare and environmental interest groups, and policy-makers. The debates invited a lively exchange of views on food, nutrition and farming, as well as on divided public perception, consumer demands and how to identify the facts when it comes to livestock production in Europe.

A strong social media commentator on the role of livestock in healthy diets, Professor Frédéric Leroy from the Brussels Free University (VUB) addressed current conversations on diets: *"While the incidence of cardiometabolic illnesses is on the rise, attempts at dietary guidance towards healthier diets are becoming more controversial and autocratic, thus contributing to further polarization."*

Speaking about the future of livestock and its contribution to sustainable development, Dr. Henning Steinfeld from the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation said: *"Improvements can be made, in particular through integrated policies and practices that target multiple objectives. Solutions for animal health and animal welfare and lowering livestock's environmental footprint, need to be based on a broad consensus among stakeholders, including consumers."*

Concluding the debates, AnimalhealthEurope President Wijnand de Bruijn promoted an improved animal health management approach for the future of livestock production in Europe, and he raised a challenge to food chain stakeholders concerned about current trends influencing policy: *"Less than 1% of conversations on food and farming online are driven by agricultural stakeholders which can fuel misperceptions and drive unrealistic expectations of food producers. We would encourage the livestock sector to be open to exchanges and to share their stories to encourage greater understanding and to show that consumer concerns are not being ignored."*

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Notes for editors:

AnimalhealthEurope represents twelve of Europe's leading manufacturers of animal medicines and twenty national associations. Covering 90% of the European Market, the animal health industry enables more than 293,000 direct and indirect jobs (incl. veterinarians), ensures that over a billion animals in Europe - both livestock and companion animals - stay healthy, while providing solutions for 10 million livestock farmers and 80 million pet-owning households across Europe.