

Press release

Advancing the three pillars of sustainability through better livestock health and welfare: applying evidence to action plans

21 January 2021, Berlin/Brussels/Washington DC; Hosted jointly by animal medicines industry associations, experts in agro-economics, livestock sustainability, natural resource management and policy discussed the contributions of better livestock health and welfare to sustainability at a panel debate during the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture.

Under the wider banner of ‘How to feed the world in times of pandemics and climate change’ the GFFA was very much focused on resilience, a common thread featured in recent policies and agreements including the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the European Green Deal.

According to Anne Mottet of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, livestock is central to the livelihoods of the 1 billion people living on less than \$2 a day and improvements to livestock health deliver clear economic benefits. Governments are encouraged to not discount the contributions of livestock to livelihoods and poverty reduction, as well as to employment and economic growth.

Livestock also offers significant opportunities to positively contribute to the environmental and social sustainability pillars, however improving livestock health and disease management are seldom accounted for in sustainability assessments.

Dr. Jude Capper explained the reduction potentials in resource use and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by improving productivity through well-managed healthy animals and used the current outbreak of African Swine Fever that is now gripping a number of European countries as a case study. With up to 150 million pigs lost to ASF in 2019, the GHG emissions invested in this production with no return (i.e. pork products did not reach the global food supply chain) amount up to 45 million tonnes.

In developing countries in particular where access to animal health services is not always evident, livestock is viewed as a key asset and safety net that is fundamental for many livelihoods, and especially important for women. Livestock also plays an essential role in balanced nutrition and good health, with the simple action of adding one egg per day to diets having the possibility to reduce childhood stunting. Shirley Tarawali from the International Food Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) highlighted the need for policymakers to recognise and harness diversity in livestock practices: from system to disease to epidemiology; from local to global; from institutional to high tech solutions; using standards and engagement incentives.

Reflecting on the discussions, Claire Bury, Deputy Director General of the Health and Food Safety Directorate at the European Commission, said *“Under the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy, the EU will actively contribute to the global transition towards sustainable agri-food systems in line with the Strategic Development Goals of the United Nations. This includes actions on*

animal health and welfare, which will help to build up resilience and to prevent possible future pandemics.”

The event discussion highlighted how shifting from ‘high-level’ conversations to analysing data that can be used to develop national action plans that lead to measurable sustainability improvements can accelerate efforts to achieve the SDGs, the European Green Deal and ultimately build a more resilient global food system. Greater investment is needed in sustainability research and disease reporting, alongside greater investment in promoting herd health planning and access to the necessary tools to support animal health.

- ENDS -

About the organisers:

AnimalhealthEurope is the association representing the animal medicines industry at Europe-level. It represents both innovators and generics alike, and its membership includes both companies and national associations, covering around 90% of the European market for animal health products.
www.animalhealtheurope.eu

Bundesverband für Tiergesundheit is the association representing the animal medicines industry in Germany, covering with 22 members around 95% of the German market for animal health products.
www.bft-online.de

HealthforAnimals is the association representing the animal medicines industry at global level. Its membership includes the world’s largest animal health companies, as well as national associations in both developed and developing countries across five continents.
www.healthforanimals.org

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