



SUSTAINABLE ANIMAL PROTEIN PRODUCTION

VIRTUAL EVENT • BST • 21 - 22 SEPTEMBER

The livestock sector caught in the crossfire – solutions for a sustainable tomorrow

An interview
with

zoetis

Ahead of the virtual Sustainable Animal Protein Production Summit, 21-22 September, we caught up with Jamie Brannan and Claudia Stuckmann-Invernizzi from Zoetis to get their insights on some of the key issues facing the livestock sector, and their possible solutions.

Recent times have been turbulent. Can you describe some of the main challenges that the livestock sector is facing?

Jamie Brannan: There are actually numerous challenges the livestock sector is dealing with. Let me start with climate change. Obviously, rising temperatures can lead to heat stress and thus altered feeding patterns by some species. We are also seeing droughts and fires in some regions and torrential rainfalls in others. While this might affect farmers directly, these extremes have also led to much higher feed prices due to smaller harvests. To make matters more complex, farmers are asked to play their part in reducing GHG emissions which will lead to extra costs in feed, husbandry and housing.

We are also still amid the Covid-19 pandemic which has led to altered buying and consumption patterns by consumers. It has partially increased the problem of labor shortage that some countries are facing, or led to closures of processing plants disturbing on-farm processes and supply chains.

When talking about disease though, we of course also have to talk about animal diseases like Avian Influenza and African Swine Fever which have come on top of the everyday diseases which farmers have to handle.

All in all, these factors have led to big disturbances in the livestock sector. Needless to say, the effects differ greatly from sector to sector, species to species and country to country. But below the line, it is obvious that challenges are getting bigger and that answers need to be found – especially with political initiatives and demand from the food chain, also changing the nature of how we rear livestock and fish.



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You mentioned that expectations are rising. To what extent might political and food chain initiatives impact livestock farming?

Claudia Stuckmann-Invernizzi:
To a very large extent actually! We started discussing the EU's Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy already last year. Both initiatives and related legislation are still being debated with important votes coming up in the European Parliament. It remains clear, that these deeply transformative policies will affect most stakeholders represented here at the summit, directly or indirectly. I'll share two examples from the many topics covered.

“ **Healthy animals are undoubtedly the prerequisite for sustainable and carbon-efficient livestock production, which positions animal health as a crucial link between sustainability and productivity.** ”

The first aspect has already been mentioned by Jamie: reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions. This is at the very core of the Commission's plans. Healthy animals are undoubtedly the prerequisite for sustainable and carbon-efficient livestock production,

which positions animal health as a crucial link between sustainability and productivity.

Secondly, the EU Commission's target of a 50% reduction in antimicrobial sales in livestock and aquaculture by 2030 touches upon a crucial point.

We all want to safeguard antibiotics for their role in treating sick animals, and we want to limit the risk of antimicrobial resistance! Let's not forget that across most of Europe a major reduction in antimicrobial sales for animal use already has been accomplished; over the past 10 years, European antimicrobial use has gone down by around one third, much more in some countries. We hence need an impact assessment to evaluate possible implications for the different livestock and aquaculture sectors of the proposed goals of the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Coming back to your question, we also see new demands from the food chain and retail. While these initially centred around the responsible use of antibiotics, they increasingly are related to aspects of husbandry and animal welfare. The latest trend that we see is retailers and processors – especially from the meat and dairy sector – pledging high GHG-reductions

or even carbon neutrality. Retailers have also started introducing eco-scores on their products. Of course, these requirements will be passed down the value chain down to farm-level.

Regardless of whether specifications on antibiotic usage and reducing the climate footprint are enforced by politics or the value chain, farmers will need to change their way of production in many cases. Both goals can be aided by best possible farming practices and good management. Ultimately though, we will also need to rely on broadening the veterinary toolbox with more innovative solutions.

We talked a lot about challenges. Can you name some opportunities and key trends in animal health that are impacting sustainability in livestock and aquaculture?

Jamie Brannan: We strongly believe that healthier animals build a healthier world. We are committed to sustainable agriculture and strongly support the important role of healthy livestock in a safe, sustainable food system that must feed 8.5 billion people by 2030. To meet the challenges we discussed, we support our customers in achieving their personal and



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external sustainability goals to raise healthier, more productive animals. To do this, we're using our expertise and knowledge in animal health to help veterinarians and livestock farmers by providing products and services that can enhance and improve the health and well-being of their animals while increasing productivity, reducing carbon emissions, water use and labor, and support responsible use of antibiotics.

Some examples include using diagnostics, data and digital technology to improve individual care of animals; innovations including immune therapies that could yield alternatives to antibiotics or understanding pathways that could help reduce methane production. Last but not least, we deliver improved access to veterinary care, products and training in developing countries, where the intensity of greenhouse gas emissions from animals is greatest.

In tandem, new opportunities through technological and medical developments have emerged. Zoetis has developed what we call the Continuum of Care to broaden the veterinary toolbox. We provide solutions to help veterinarians predict, prevent, detect and treat disease across the animal's entire lifecycle.

Let me dwell a little more on the example of genomic prediction. We have leveraged a deep understanding of the bovine genome and can accurately predict the relative risk of the most common diseases in dairy cattle. Through selective breeding, farmers can now create healthier herds while safeguarding productivity. We have proven this through detailed trials in the US and Europe.

But while we have spoken a lot about livestock, I also wanted to mention companion animals. Ultimately, we are also bringing value to our customers and society through helping pets live longer, happier and healthier lives!

“ **With challenges of such complexity, I believe that no single part of the food chain can solve them alone** ”

What obstacles do we need to overcome to accelerate sustainability across the value chain?

Claudia Stuckmann-Invernizzi:

Let me first stress that we need to find the right balance in the debate. Yes, the challenges are big, as we discussed in length.

But so are the opportunities!

With the challenges that we are facing being of such complexity, I believe that no single part of the food chain can solve them alone. This is why we cooperate intensively with the food chain, with academia, with vets, farmers and communities.

First of all, we need to start listening to each other, understanding and accepting that everyone involved has specific challenges and interests. Zoetis also engages in specific projects with diverse stakeholders. These projects can help to advance the adoption of more sustainable farming practices.

Specific partnerships include:

- Exploring mechanisms that may inhibit methane emissions from cattle and sheep to thereby reduce greenhouse gas emissions through studies with a New Zealand-based research consortium.
- Working together with a big European dairy company testing over 1,000 dairy cows with our genomic tests and establishing benchmarks for farmers, ultimately enabling them to breed healthier herds, while at the same time increasing profitability and decreasing antibiotic-usage.

- Closely working together with Vietnam's biggest pangasius producer, Vinh Hoan, to improve aquaculture systems and develop vaccines further for even better efficacy.

- Researching to understand the livestock immune system to pave the way for new alternatives to antibiotics in food-producing animals at the Zoetis Incubator based in the Colorado State University Research Innovation Center.

- Working together with big, integrated food chain companies in Asia-Pacific to increase animal welfare and choose a more targeted approach to antibiotic usage.

These examples highlight how working together can enhance the sustainability of the food chain and bring greater value to society!

While you outline a positive future for the livestock sector in Europe and other parts of the world – how can

developing countries also benefit from increased animal health?

Jamie Brannan: This is actually a question that we have asked ourselves as well! At Zoetis, our commitment to sustainable agriculture and healthy food-producing animals is in direct support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-Being, Gender Equality, Climate Action and Life on Land.

Of course, our aim is that increased animal health benefits livestock farmers around the world. We are thus actively bringing innovations to emerging markets and creating solutions tailored to each geography's specific needs.

Especially in emerging markets, contributions to improved animal health can really make a difference for better living standards. We are thus working on increasing the availability

of veterinary medicines, creating sustainable diagnostic networks, and providing training and education to farmers in sub-Saharan Africa through the Zoetis African Livestock Productivity and Health Advancement (A.L.P.H.A.) initiative, which is co-funded by a grant of over \$14 million by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Through these activities, we positively impact farmers' livelihoods in Nigeria, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Tanzania and help them provide a safe food supply. It is great to see that other companies are doing the same thing. For example, Arla with their Milky Way project in Nigeria which will aid self-sufficiency in the dairy sector. Improving animal health can contribute to sustainable economic development everywhere, can mitigate climate change, and is important for a global One Health approach!



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