

HOW THE ANIMAL HEALTH INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTES TO SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION OF SAFE FOOD

FACT SHEET



Sustainable food production is, in essence, the production and supply of food in a manner that is beneficial to society, environmentally responsible and economically viable.

Animal health products are essential tools in the production of safe, quality food, and are vital to the protection of animal health and welfare. This fact sheet addresses the animal health industry's contribution to sustainable production of safe food.

Sustainable production is about trying to achieve a balance between numerous factors:

- **consumer safety along with animal health and welfare**
- **the supply of quality food at affordable prices and the provision of fair returns for producers**
- **the protection of environmental resources for current and future generations whilst securing supply for a growing population**

Societal impact

Safe food is a prerequisite for supplying the market and is closely related to the health of the animals this food originates from. Animal health products, like vaccines and pharmaceuticals, help to achieve, maintain or recover high levels of animal health. The use of vaccines against Salmonella in poultry is considered a major contributor to the observed reduction in the incidence of human salmonellosis at the national and European Union level^{1,2,3}.

Society also expects animal welfare standards to be at the highest level. Pharmaceuticals, like products to treat bovine mastitis, reduce mortality and disease caused by clinical and subclinical mastitis. Additionally these products have a beneficial effect on milk quality and animal welfare by limiting the impact and occurrence of painful udder infections.

Environmental impact

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) estimates that 20% of animal productivity is lost due to animal diseases. These losses can range from the almost invisible ones such as lower productivity in infected animals, to the more obvious ones due to the culling of healthy animals as part of official 'stamping-out campaigns' or the removal of animals or their products during governmental or processors' inspections. The loss of productivity or death of an animal has very negative environmental consequences in terms of feed, water, energy and land use, as well as carbon dioxide production.

Economic impact

The economic impact is closely related to productivity loss due to animal diseases and depends on the specific disease and region. Data on the economic impact of specific diseases such as Porcine Circovirus, parasites and worm infections in the EU is available on IFAH-Europe's website⁴.

¹ S.O'Brien, Clinical infectious Diseases 2013 (56), 705-710

² EFSA-ECDC, 2013. The European Union Summary Report on Trends and Sources of Zoonoses, Zoonotic Agents and Food-borne Outbreaks in 2011; EFSA Journal 2013,11(4):3129

³ IFAH-Europe Salmonella Fact Sheet <http://www.ifaheurope.org/food-producing-animals/success-stories.html>

⁴ <http://www.ifaheurope.org/food-producing-animals/success-stories.html>

The Conference on material and immaterial costs of animal diseases (Brussels, 15-16 December 2004) organised by the EU Presidency, quantified the impact of three major outbreaks in Europe as follows⁵:

- 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in UK: total cost €12 billion (2030 farms infected, 6.14 million animals slaughtered)
- 1997-1998 Classical Swine Fever in The Netherlands: total cost €2.1 billion (429 farms infected, 11 million animals slaughtered)
- 2003 Avian Influenza in The Netherlands: total cost €0.51 billion (241 farms infected, 30.7 million animals slaughtered)

Food production can be characterised as a global economic activity for a global market. Europe sources its food globally, therefore the global economic impact of animal diseases is relevant for Europe as well. These are addressed in a comprehensive report titled 'The costs of animal diseases'⁶. The FAO report 'Food losses and food waste' estimates dairy cow illness (mostly mastitis infections) results in a decreased milk yield by approximately 3-4%. It should be recognised that the impact on food output is the greatest in developing countries where two-thirds of the world's 1.5 billion poor rely on livestock as their main source of food and income⁷

Animal health products have a significant impact on the economics of animal production and food processing, preventing losses that could otherwise jeopardise the financial viability of farmers and food processors, and helping to ensure that the best use is made of inputs, like animal feed, labour, logistics, etc.

It is clear that the animal health industry significantly contributes to the three pillars of sustainability: Social, Environment and Economic:

- For society sustainable production means higher quality of safe food products of animal origin with higher animal welfare standards
- The environment benefits from the increased efficiency of natural resources usage and the reduction of waste products, not suitable for human consumption
- Food animal production is more economically viable thanks to fewer losses due to animal diseases, less products discarded as not fit for human consumption. Additionally veterinary medicines can be used to avoid large-scale stamping-out strategies to control outbreaks of specific infectious diseases.

Useful links

- DG SANCO on animal diseases
http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/index_en.htm
- International Institute for Sustainable Development
<http://www.iisd.org/>

IFAH-Europe is the representative body of manufacturers of veterinary medicines, vaccines and other animal health products in Europe. IFAH-Europe's membership covers 90% of the European market for veterinary products. Member companies invest over €400 million in research and development every year. IFAH-Europe promotes a single market in veterinary medicines across the EU ensuring the availability of medicines to protect the health and welfare of animals.

www.ifaheurope.org - @IFAHEurope

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/strategy/kallio_presentation_en.pdf

⁶ http://www.ifahsec.org/wp-content/files_mf/1349337863OxfordAnalyticaTheCostsofAnimalDisease_October2012.pdf

⁷ OIE, B.Vallat; Opening speech European Veterinary Week, Brussels, Nov 10, 2008