



## EU Farm to Fork Strategy:

### An ambitious strategy which would gain from comprehensively embracing ONE HEALTH

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*Bruxelles, 6 July 2020*

**The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) represents around 300 000 veterinarians across Europe. Many of them are actively involved in the food chain, at all stages caring for the health and welfare of animals and food safety. Through their work, veterinarians contribute to the prevention and control of zoonotic diseases and the protection of public health.**

**FVE welcomes the EU Commission's Farm to Fork Strategy. Many of the strategy's goals are in line with FVE's mission to enhance animal health, animal welfare, public health and the protection of the environment. However, FVE believes that an opportunity is missed by the strategy not comprehensively embracing a One Health approach. Furthermore, FVE provides additional comments on antimicrobial resistance, animal welfare and the costs of food animal production.**

FVE welcomes the EU Commission's recently launched Farm to Fork Strategy and supports the EU Commission's roadmap to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). FVE specifically welcomes the ambitious plans to improve the transition to more sustainable food production systems with better animal welfare, less food waste and strengthened efforts to eliminate food fraud.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant global impact but, at a time when all our lives are being disrupted in some way, it provides an opportunity to reflect on the sustainability of our food systems. Europe has made enormous progress in increasing the efficiency of food production, through innovative approaches and the development of new technologies. EU food safety is at a very high level but recent developments have put pressure on other parts of the food supply chain, and occasionally resulted in the unintended consequences of making it less resilient and undermining sustainability.

FVE understands that Farm to Fork is a high-level strategy and its impact will depend on the way ideas will be turned into firm actions. FVE will closely follow the development and implementation of the strategy. However, there are a few points that stand out for FVE and on which we want to provide comments at this stage:

#### **ONE HEALTH**

FVE believes the Farm to Fork strategy is a missed opportunity to comprehensively embrace One Health, the concept that the wellbeing of people, animals and ecosystems are strongly interconnected. It is estimated that 60% of all infectious diseases and 75% of the new and emerging diseases in people originate in animals.

**President**

Rens van Dobbenburgh

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During ‘peacetime’, it is crucial that we strengthen contingency plans to ensure the functionality of the food chain in times of crisis. Controlling individual diseases is very important; however, we also need to better understand imbalances in natural and social systems that facilitate the emergence and spread of new diseases. Collaborative approaches embracing professionals involved in public, animal and environmental health are critical to ensuring that we can prevent future spill-over of zoonoses.

### **ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE**

FVE supports the ambition to promote the more prudent use of antimicrobials in animal production. Over the last decade, significant steps forward have been made. As European veterinary profession, we are delighted that over the years 2011-2017, we have been able to reduce the use of antimicrobials in animals by 32%<sup>i</sup> and we will continue to encourage that downward trend. However, it must also be recognised that, even under very good husbandry conditions, livestock can contract infectious diseases, which need to be treated. Antimicrobials remain essential for the health and welfare of animals.

### **ANIMAL WELFARE**

Animal welfare is increasingly of interest to consumers and it is a key element of the sustainability of the food supply chain. Animals should always be kept in conditions in which they can thrive. Attention must go to husbandry systems that are adapted to the needs of the animals rather than trying to adapt animals to the needs of husbandry systems. For welfare and health reasons, mixing animals and long-distance transport of animals should be reduced to the minimum. FVE welcomes the ambition to revise EU Animal Welfare legislation, especially for transport and slaughter, and to provide a minimum level of protection for all animals.

### **COSTS OF ANIMAL PRODUCTION AND FOOD**

While the Farm to Fork strategy underlines the importance of the affordability of food and maintaining a fair return for farmers, it does not speak about the real costs of food animal production. Currently, competition on price can lead to corners being cut, increasing risk and reduced sustainability in the food supply chain. To maintain an ethically sustainable supply chain, costs cannot be shifted by having an adverse effect on animal welfare or pushed forward to future generations by ignoring the impact on the environment.

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#### *Notes to Editors*

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is an umbrella organisation of veterinary organisations from 40 European countries, representing a total of around 300 000 veterinarians. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) strives to promote animal health, animal welfare and public health across Europe.

For further information, consult the FVE website [www.fve.org](http://www.fve.org)  
FVE Secretariat on Tel +32 2 533 70 20 or by e-mail to [info@fve.org](mailto:info@fve.org)

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<sup>i</sup> [https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/report/sales-veterinary-antimicrobial-agents-31-european-countries-2017\\_en.pdf](https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/report/sales-veterinary-antimicrobial-agents-31-european-countries-2017_en.pdf)