

# **OIE International Conference on Animal Identification and Traceability**

**“From Farm to Fork”**

**Buenos Aires, Argentina**

**23 - 25 March**

**Opening address by Dr Bernard Vallat  
Director General of the World Organisation for Animal Health**

Dr Jorge Nestor Amaya, Delegate of Argentina to the OIE and Representative of the Argentinian Government

Dr Barry O'Neil, President of the OIE

Mr Lourens Bosman, Chair of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) Group on Meats and Feeds, and Member of the IFAP Executive Committee

Mr Michael Scannell, Adviser to the Animal Health and Welfare Director General (DG SANCO), European Commission

Mrs Irene Hoffmann, Head of the Animal Production Service, FAO

Dr Kazuaki Miyagishima, Secretary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

Dr Peter Fernandez, Head of the USDA Delegation

Dr Luis Barcos, OIE Regional Representative for the Americas

Delegates to the OIE

Honourable participants

There are almost 500 of you here today who have from all over the world to take part in this event organised by teams from the OIE Headquarters in Paris and the Organisation's Regional Representation in Buenos Aires. It gives me very great pleasure to welcome you to this Conference on Animal Identification and Traceability, “From Farm to Fork”.

First of all, on your behalf I should like to thank the Argentinian Government for hosting and helping to finance this conference. I should also like to express my gratitude to the organisations that have also provided support, especially the European Commission and the United States Department of Agriculture (the USDA) and many others, such as the SADC, without whose help this event would not have been possible.

I must also acknowledge the support received from the private sector. During the conference you are invited to visit the trade exhibition on the first floor and see for yourself the latest technological developments in the field of identification and traceability. All this financial support, coupled with the

registration fees paid by participants, has allowed the OIE to finance the participation of delegations from over 50 developing countries.

Animal identification and traceability are essential tools for controlling animal diseases but effective control can only be achieved through the participation of all. Failure on the part of one country can place all others in danger.

We have the very great honour to welcome high level delegations from the public sector, International Organisations, organisations representing animal producers, processors and distributors, scientific research organisations and consumer organisations, as well as manufacturers in the field of identification and traceability.

From time immemorial animal owners have used various methods to mark their animals, especially as a way of deterring thieves. Thus, they already used what we shall be referring to during the conference as animal identification.

Traceability on the other hand has developed more recently as an essential tool to control animal diseases, as seen in the recent mad cow disease crisis.

Traceability depends on effective identification policies and the application of harmonised methods, making it possible to know an animal's place of origin, its successive movements and the use to which it is put up until the time of its death. As we shall see, the value of traceability extends far beyond the control of animal diseases.

The implementation of identification and traceability policies forms an essential component of national, regional and global animal disease control strategies. Our Member Countries and Territories have therefore asked the OIE to prepare and submit for their adoption standards aimed at underlining the importance of these practices as well as providing the minimum technical basis to ensure that policies are harmonised in this field.

During the conference I shall be using the term 'standards' to refer to the standards issued by the OIE and the Codex Alimentarius Commission that fall within the framework of the World Trade Organization Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. These are democratically adopted, science-based and transparent standards. Other types of standards, often called private standards, do exist but are not developed under the auspices of Governments. They are often very useful in that they complement SPS standards by providing operators with far more detail than SPS standards. The SPS standards issued by the OIE and the Codex Alimentarius Commission, however, are results orientated rather than dictating the methods to be used. They recognise as equivalent different systems that can achieve the same results.

Private standards established by organisations such as ISO and ICAR are a useful means of harmonising the technologies used, as for example microchip reading characteristics. It is however essential that these standards do not contradict SPS standards, and do not promote requirements that would be impossible for developing countries to comply with and would unfairly block their access to regional and world markets.

I should also like to raise the matter of effective implementation of identification and traceability programmes at the national or even regional level. These programmes are essential especially as a means of controlling animal diseases. As such, they are integrated into the actions of Veterinary Services throughout the world, actions that constitute an international public good. Good governance

and compliance by all countries with OIE standards of quality and evaluation of Veterinary Services will consequently be important factors in guaranteeing the successful application of identification and traceability at the national level.

Yet, over and above the control of epizootics, identification and traceability have become vital factors in guaranteeing that consumers of animal products benefit not only from effective sanitary controls “from farm to fork” in compliance with the policies advocated by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the OIE, but also increasingly precise information on the source and quality characteristics of products and their link to a particular agricultural region. In this respect, I should like to thank our colleagues, the experts from the Codex Alimentarius Commission and FAO, who will be making very important contributions during the conference. We shall all need to pay particular attention to the question of the link to be established between the identification and traceability of live animals and the identification and traceability of their products.

During the coming three days, we shall begin by trying to help all countries to speak with one voice and to conduct policies that are appropriate and compatible with each other for the purposes of trade.

We shall endeavour to convince the most prosperous countries and international donor agencies of the importance of helping poor countries to embark on national programmes, since the worldwide movement for identification and traceability now underway is irreversible and must be undertaken by all. No-one must be left by the wayside.

We shall demonstrate that neither governments nor the private sector can set up and manage national programmes in isolation. The only way to achieve satisfactory results is through effective cooperation between governments, Veterinary Services and their partners and producers and the private sector.

Lastly, it will be important to issue recommendations for continued technological improvements and to direct applied research towards the development of cheaper and more reliable techniques for all animal species, including animals raised in aquaculture in view of this sector's promising future. This conference therefore gives us a unique opportunity to get things moving and advance together to ensure less disease and an abundant supply of healthy, good quality food for all.

For its part, the OIE will continue to prepare standards, applicable to all animal species, will continue to influence governments and donor agencies to ensure that progress is shared by all and will continue to use the OIE World Fund for Animal Health and Welfare to improve the governance of animal health and food safety systems and to develop capacity building programmes for national Delegates and focal points to be implemented by our Regional and Sub-Regional Representations.

The recommendations that you adopt at the end of the conference will be of great importance in helping to shape all our policies.

I wish you a successful conference.

Thank you for your attention.