"Agriculture in a Post-Kyoto Terrain"

Event organised by World Farmers’ Organisation (WFO) in association with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

9 December 2015

Background

The OIE Director General was invited to participate in a high level panel on the impacts of climate change.

The panel was chaired by: Ms. Julie Foster, News Anchor Arise TV, BBC World Service Television.

Panel Members:

- Mr Tim Groser, New Zealand Minister for Climate Change
- Dr Bernard Vallat, Director General, World Organisation for Animal Health
- Dr Evelyn Nguleka, President, World Farmer’s Organisation
- Ms Arancha Gonzales, Executive Director, International Trade Centre
- Mr Enrico Letta, former Prime Minister of Italy and Dean of the Paris School of International Affairs
- Ms Christina Figueres, Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

STATEMENT

Dr Bernard Vallat, OIE Director General

- In my remarks I would like to highlight two main areas for consideration this morning. The first is the unfortunate and damaging imbalance in the public debate of the benefits versus the unintended consequences of animal production. The second is the impact of climate change on animal health and health outcomes.
- The terrestrial and aquatic animal production sectors are vital for global food security and for the economic well-being of many countries and their citizens. According to the FAO, for over one billion poor people in the world, animals, their products and byproducts contribute directly to family livelihoods.
- While reports have been published that demonstrate the negative impacts that can be associated with intensive production systems, unfortunately they often fail to tell the whole story of the diversity of the global production system and of the significant positive contributions that livestock make to humans.
- Unfortunately the science is invariably complex and too often in attempting to simplify the communication the context and full disclosure is lost. Two recent examples are the contribution of livestock to greenhouse gas emissions and the second is the report of red meat as a carcinogen.
- In the case of the former, much of the debate draws from the publication of the Livestock Long Shadow Report from several years ago. Both the authors of that
report and other researchers have revised the estimates downwards in subsequent publications but, because they are less sensationalist, they have tended to be ignored. If properly managed, livestock can have a positive effect on the environment and provide climate change mitigation options through efficiency gains and carbon sequestration. Livestock play an important role in ecosystem restoration and biodiversity conservation through soil and vegetation renewal. Properly handled livestock waste can be used as a source of renewable energy and organic fertilizer thus substituting for fossil-fuel based inputs.

- In the case of the latter (cancer risk), issues of life style contribution, method of meat processing and preparation, genetic predisposition and the inability to repeat some of the data findings in the published literature is not equally reported. Nor is the critical role that many micronutrients that are readily and in some cases almost exclusively available in red meat play in brain and early childhood development.

- Informed decisions in the public interest should not be made on the basis of selective science or pseudoscience that may be driven by an agenda unrelated to the stated objective of sustainable, climate smart agriculture.

- Livestock productions systems are diverse at the global level and range from pastoralists to extensive husbandry systems to intensive systems.

- It is also important to understand the capacity for climate change to impact on animal disease occurrence and spread. This is equally true for those diseases which affect animals as well as zoonotic diseases which are capable of being transmitted being animals and humans. Whether through the potential changes in vector competency and distribution, migration patterns, immune competency, or the loss of biodiversity, the factors that could lead to increased disease occurrences require that we make the necessary investments in early disease detection, disease reporting, the quality of veterinary services and public private partnerships to better prevent, prepare and respond to disease occurrences.

- Those involved in the rearing and care of animals are some of the most resourceful and innovative people on the planet. They are able to adapt to changes in climatic conditions consumer demands and changes in technology.

- We need to ensure a collective, interdisciplinary approach to the development and adoption of best practices to position the sector for success in the post-Kyoto terrain.

- The cooperation between WFO and OIE is very welcome.