

RF-010/2020

Ms Commissioner Kyriakides
(sent by e-mail only)

29 April 2020

Subject: COVID-19 crisis - measures to be implemented coming out of this crisis

Dear Commissioner,

The animal health industry in Europe greatly appreciates the measures taken by the European Commission thus far to support public health, animal health, and Europe's food supply during this current COVID-19 pandemic.

Looking to measures to be implemented coming out of this crisis, we believe that the protection of humans and animals from pandemics such as COVID-19 and emerging infectious diseases must be a key priority for European policies.

To achieve this goal, AnimalhealthEurope has drafted a 10-point plan you will find attached.

The current crisis shows us once again the disastrous knock-on effects such pandemics can have not only on our health, but also on our economy, the functioning of our supply chains and the future of Europe in general.

Well-managed modern bio secure farms, where animals are monitored closely, are key to continued food safety and food security. In line with sustainable intensification practicesⁱ, such farms are a part of the solution to climate change, higher animal welfare, and improved biodiversity.

The challenges arising from this crisis need to be acknowledged and faced in a scientific and logical manner. It is the role of the European Commission, together with Member States to protect its citizens and animals and take vigorous action to be better prepared and anticipate what will undoubtedly impact Europe in the months and years ahead.

We would call on the European Commission to support food security and supply while protecting people and animals from emerging infectious diseases with actions to be taken in the short and medium term. Such an approach would help Europe be better prepared for eventual similar challenges in the future.

We will continue to research facts and scientific reports on infectious emerging diseases, their spread and possible impacts on European livestock farming and remain happy to provide information to EU institutions as needed.

Looking forward to your reaction and to have the opportunity to meet you and get acquainted, as unfortunately our March meeting had to be cancelled.

Best regards.



Wijnand de Bruijn
President of AnimalhealthEurope



Roxane Feller
Secretary General

Copy:

Vice Presidents M. Timmermans and Schinas
Commissioners M. Wojciechowski, Sinkevicius and Hogan
DG Santé : Anne Bucher (DG) - Sabine Jülicher (Dir) - Christian Siebert (HoU)

Safeguarding the health of people, animals and the environment
“One Health” to be at the core of the EU policy agenda

AnimalhealthEurope’s 10-point plan for the future of EU One Health

With some urgency, we call on the institutions immediately to:

1. Avoid the spread of misinformation on links between livestock farming and COVID-19, as was recently the case by a Commission officialⁱⁱ, thus weakening Europe’s scientific credentials and reputation; and on the contrary counter “fake news” with factual and science-based statements.

The current known facts on livestock, it’s products and COVID19 can be found in reference at the end of this document ⁱⁱⁱ.

In the short-term we would ask the Commission

2. Support European food security and independence.
3. Promote all farming models, including sustainable intensification practices, to support food security in Europe, and to produce enough food for the increasing global population on existing farmland to preserve surrounding lands and biodiversity those lands support.
4. Promote new technologies to support improved farming practices, raise awareness of their benefits to society and their role in overcoming future health challenges.
5. Promote the testing and assessment of new agricultural techniques and support their deployment to allow for precision livestock farming focused on the wellbeing of animals, particularly where low productivity is caused by disease, insufficient feed, and other causes of ill health.
6. Provide incentives for improved biosecurity measures to be deployed and pay attention to the management of the interface between farms and wildlife (issue raised currently with African Swine Fever).

7. Support the establishment of vaccine banks ^{iv} that allow rapid vaccination of people and animals in case of transmission risk and provide incentives to develop vaccines and other tools which support early detection and prevent spread of diseases between animals and people.

In the medium-term we would advocate for:

8. The development of a more affirmative Commission policy towards facilitating vaccination without impeding trade of livestock or livestock products.
9. Support for development policies in LMICs that avoid encroachment into wildlife areas and support for sustainable livestock policies in developing countries to improve the efficiency and resilience of the food system, as well as making food accessible and affordable to all.
10. Ramping up monitoring and surveillance of potential zoonotic diseases, also using digital epidemiology, from wildlife that may infect animals on a global scale, and facilitate exchange of expertise between disciplines.

References

- i Sustainable intensification practices
 - An editorial providing high level views
<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s10705-017-9851-0.pdf>
 - Sustainable intensification of agriculture for human prosperity and global sustainability: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13280-016-0793-6>
 - Livestock, livelihoods and the environment: understanding the trade-offs :
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1877343509000335>
 - Evidence of sustainable intensification among British farms:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1877343509000335>
 - Sustainable intensification in agriculture: the richer shade of green. A review
<https://d-nb.info/114894365X/34>
 - How the sustainable intensification of agriculture can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals
<https://research.wur.nl/en/publications/sustainable-intensification-in-agriculture-the-richer-shade-of-gr>

ii **Recently in the press**

- Reuters: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-eu-wildlife/eu-to-step-up-rules-on-factory-farming-wildlife-trading-amid-pandemic-idUSKBN21Z2M6>
- NYT: <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2020/04/17/world/europe/17reuters-health-coronavirus-eu-wildlife.html?smid=tw-share>

iii **The current known facts on livestock, its products and COVID19**

- According to the current state of knowledge, livestock used for the production of meat cannot be infected with SARS-CoV-2, and is therefore unable to transmit the virus to humans via this path. ([BfR](#))
- To date, preliminary findings from studies suggest that poultry and pigs, are not susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection. ([OIE](#))
- There is currently no evidence that food is a likely source or route of transmission of the virus. ([EFSA](#))+([DG Santé Q&A](#))
- Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that animals infected by humans are playing a role in the spread of COVID-19. Human outbreaks are driven by person to person contact. ([OIE](#))
- While there is ongoing research into a potential animal origin of the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), the spread and development of the current human pandemic is due to human-to-human transmission. There is no current evidence of animals playing a role in the spread of COVID-19. ([FAO](#))+ ([ECDC](#))

iv

DG SANTE opinion

- With regard to vaccine banks: [Policy Paper \(SANCO/7070/2010\) EXPERT OPINION ON VACCINE AND/OR DIAGNOSTIC BANKS FOR MAJOR ANIMAL DISEASES, Strategic planning options for emergency situations or major crises](#)