

BUILDING A GLOBAL AGENDA OF ACTION IN SUPPORT OF RESPONSIBLE LIVESTOCK SECTOR DEVELOPMENT



This note describes the preparation of a Global Agenda of Action through a consultative process which focuses on consensus building among key stakeholders in the livestock sector for a subsequent operational phase. Initially, the Global Agenda will focus on generating and mobilizing knowledge, and building capacity and partnerships to increase the resource-use efficiency of the global livestock sector while safeguarding other environmental, socio-economic and public health outcomes.

Growing populations, income gains and urbanization have made livestock one of the fastest growing sub-sectors of agriculture. Growth in emerging economies has been particularly impressive and has been associated with a widespread transformation of the livestock sector. However, livestock sector growth has been largely unbalanced and often not been accompanied by concomitant adjustments and improvements in sector policies, governance and investments. Continuing demand expansion for livestock products and increasing resource constraints will likely exacerbate these trends.

The livestock sector has particularly come into focus as concerns about climate change, sustainability of food systems and public health protection and the urgency of poverty reduction through agricultural development continue to grow. This will be even more important as the world's food production needs to be doubled by 2050 to feed its then population of nine billion. Livestock are the world's largest user of agricultural land, directly as pasture and indirectly through the use of feed crops, and livestock source food requires more feed, energy and water resources per unit product than most other food products. Meat, milk and eggs will therefore only be able to maintain their role as a provider of high quality food, if these higher resource needs will be brought in line with global resource availability. The livestock sector, however, can contribute significantly to society's environmental, social,

economic and health objectives if the necessary policy changes, adjustments in the regulatory frameworks, and supporting investments are made.

The development of a Global Agenda of Action aims to respond to these opportunities.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

A Global Agenda of Action for Responsible Livestock Sector Development will be built on broad based, voluntary and informal stakeholder commitment to act towards improved sector performance targeting natural resource protection, while including poverty reduction and public health protection, as they relate to the livestock sector.

The Global Agenda foresees three functions:

1. Strategic analysis and collation of information and knowledge;
2. Sharing of knowledge and practices through dialogue, dissemination and capacity building; and
3. Application and piloting of principles and approaches.

These functions will be carried out through a platform constituted by key stakeholders including governments, private sector, civil society and international organizations, supported by independent panels of high-level specialists for autonomous analysis, and a secretariat for coordination, knowledge management and capacity building.

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The Global Agenda aims to improve resource use in the livestock sector, resulting from improved practices by stakeholders; and adoption, by the public and private sector, of guidance and recommendations to make livestock food value chains more sustainable.

DEVELOPING THE GLOBAL AGENDA

At this initial stage it is proposed that the Global Agenda will build its Environmental Chapter and focus on the impacts of the livestock value chain on natural resources. Currently, livestock are a major contributor to climate change, land degradation, water pollution and the erosion of biodiversity. There is, however, large potential to reduce the sector's ecological foot print, and enhance its role in climate change mitigation, nutrient recycling and biodiversity conservation. This can be done by addressing existing policy failures such as access to land, subsidies on inputs (water, feed and energy), by aligning incentives to environmental outcomes, rewarding providers of environmental services and by promoting best practices. Previous experiences have shown that livestock farming can make a major contribution to carbon sequestration and the enrichment of the bio-diversity through the introduction of new technology and payment for environmental services. In other places, important reductions in water use and pollution have been achieved by reconnecting specialized livestock production with crop agriculture.

NEXT STEPS

To ensure the constructive participation of countries, private sector and civil society stakeholders, the Animal Production and Health Division of the FAO, in collaboration with the World Bank, are now organizing broad consultations, to formulate and agree on a programme in support of the Global Agenda, and to seek funds for its global promotion.

This preparatory process will also be supported through strategic analyses by independent experts on how to accommodate global livestock sector growth and change, today and in future. Two stakeholder meetings are scheduled to take place in May 2011 and in September 2011. The first meeting will focus on the identification of objectives, priorities and the conceptual framework for a Global Agenda, whilst the September meeting will make decisions on the final substance, shape and implementation parameters of a Global Agenda of Action, as well as concrete stakeholder buy-in and funding pledges.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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