

# BUILDING A GLOBAL AGENDA OF ACTION IN SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE LIVESTOCK SECTOR DEVELOPMENT



*This note describes the preparation of a Global Agenda of Action through a participatory process which focuses on consensus building among key stakeholders in the livestock sector for a subsequent operational phase.*

*A Global Agenda of Action will focus on the improvement of resource-use efficiency in the livestock sector to support livelihoods, long-term food security and economic growth while safeguarding other environmental 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. Currently, the livestock sector is 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.

If the necessary policy changes, adjustments in the regulatory frameworks, and supporting investments are made, the livestock sector can contribute significantly to society's environmental, social, economic and health objectives. The development of a Global Agenda of Action responds to these opportunities.

### BUILDING A GLOBAL AGENDA OF ACTION

A Global Agenda of Action for Sustainable Livestock Sector Development is built on broad based, voluntary and informal stakeholder commitment to act towards the improvement of resource-use efficiency in the global livestock sector to support livelihoods, long-term food security and economic growth while safeguarding other environmental and public health outcomes, factoring in regional differences, and linking to other related initiatives as appropriate.

To ensure the constructive participation of countries, private sector, civil society, and international organization stakeholders in the development of a Global Agenda of Action, FAO, in close collaboration with the World Bank, have been involved in broad consultations to discuss

and agree its objectives, priorities, and conceptual framework.

The initiative is also linked closely to the FAO's inter-governmental processes of its Committee on Agriculture, which during its 22nd session (COAG, 2010) recommended the organization to actively engage in a global dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders to sharpen the definition of the livestock sector's objectives, taking into account the disparities between production systems, the proliferation of private standards, the countries' economic development, the role of smallholders, the importance of exports, and the status of natural resources.

Building on the above preparatory activities, the first multi-stakeholder platform meeting was held in Brasilia, Brazil from 17 to 20 May 2011.

### WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The vision of a Global Agenda of Action is Sustainable Livestock Sector Development which contributes to food and nutritional security - in a context of rapidly growing demand and resource scarcity -, enhances its contribution to broad-based economic growth, livelihoods and wellbeing of actors in the livestock sector, uses natural resources efficiently, recognizes regional diversity, and reduces risks to the health and welfare of human and animal populations. Its scope is global and covers all major livestock sector systems, stakeholders, and related value chains.

The Global Agenda of Action foresees five functions:

1. Strategic analyses, including policy and institutional analyses, methodology and investment guidelines development in support of sustainable livestock sector development;

# BUILDING A GLOBAL AGENDA OF ACTION

IN SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE LIVESTOCK SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

2. Generation and sharing of local and global knowledge, experiences, and practices through R&D, dialogue, and dissemination
3. Promotion of capacity building;
4. Support to the piloting of new approaches within livestock sector systems, stakeholders, and related value chains to test, validate, and transfer practices; and
5. Advocacy, including the promotion of sustainable livestock sector development within existing inter-governmental and other processes.

These functions are 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.

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

## NEXT STEPS

Global and regional stakeholder consultations will continue and the multi-stakeholder platform and process will also be further developed through virtual networking.

Proposals on all decisions that are part of the outcomes of the first multi-stakeholder platform meeting in Brazil are being developed by the secretariat in close collaboration with a Preparatory Committee and will be shared with the multi-stakeholder platform for consultation and comments.

The next meeting, planned for the last quarter of 2011, will be another intermediary step to find agreement on these proposals, including governance mechanisms and Steering Committee selection criteria, in further preparation for a launch of a Global Agenda of Action in the first quarter of 2012.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Henning Steinfeld  
Chief, Livestock Information,  
Sector Analysis and Policy Branch  
Animal Production and Health Division  
Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations  
[henning.steinfeld@fao.org](mailto:henning.steinfeld@fao.org)

