

Open Letter on the Value of Animal Agriculture

How livestock is supporting global nutrition, high standards of food safety and public health during the Covid-19 pandemic

The coronavirus crisis has brought into focus the incredible public health challenge our world faces, and nowhere is this challenge more apparent than in food production. Nourishing the world during this crisis is a top priority across nations.

Our world needs the contributions of livestock. Globally, 1.3 billion people depend on livestock for their employmentⁱ, while billions more rely on livestock to provide food for their families. Animal agriculture provides milk, meat, fish and eggs at a time when access to safe, nutritious and affordable food is necessary to fend off a potential global hunger crisisⁱⁱ, and offers invaluable support for farmers facing severe, often existential, economic hardships.

The precise origin of Covid-19 remains under investigation, but ongoing research continues to confirm that **domestic livestock production is safe and has not played a role in the spread of Covid-19**^{iii iv v}. Current evidence points to a journey from wild animals to humans^{vi}, which aligns with research showing most zoonotic diseases originate in wildlife.

However, some are making unfounded claims that livestock and modern agriculture were somehow the source of the pandemic. This threatens to distract the global public health response at a time when **animal agriculture can offer lessons for wildlife zoonosis management** as part of the long-term pandemic preparedness.

For example, **livestock diseases are monitored globally**^{vii} to help prevent them from spreading across borders the way that Covid-19 has done, and advances in farm and facility practices, animal nutrition, veterinary diagnostics and medicine mean many zoonotic diseases, such as *Salmonella*, are well managed in most economies. Using these learnings to develop more robust early warning systems for wildlife could enhance our ability to detect emerging diseases.

Importantly, **livestock production is a regulated, monitored system with food safety and public health at its core**. Even in the face of unprecedented challenges, farms and food facilities are taking every precaution possible to keep employees as safe as possible and fulfill their critical roles in our food supply, while producers continue to rely on biosecurity, hygiene, vaccination, and other tools to control animal disease.

The knowledge and expertise of the livestock sector can help strengthen the global Covid-19 response and tackle the growing risk of nutrition insecurity.

We urge authorities, intergovernmental groups, and NGOs to support these efforts by:

- **Reaffirming the safety of livestock production** and reminding consumers of our robust food safety system, including the important role of veterinarians and animal nutrition.
- **Refuting misinformation** that tries to manufacture a link between livestock and the spread of Covid-19.
- **Consulting with livestock experts, including farmers and other stakeholders in the feed and food chain** to understand how to aid their efforts to feed communities.

During this pandemic, livestock farms and the value chain are working tirelessly to ensure we have safe and affordable food to eat and drink. It's vital that society supports these efforts and tap into their knowledge to build a more resilient world in the future.

See Next Page for Signatories

This letter is undersigned by the following organisations and individuals*

International Signatories



Dr. Daniel Bercovici
Chairman
International Feed Industry
Federation



Donald Moore
Executive Director
Global Dairy Platform



Guillaume Roué
President
International Meat Secretariat



Dr. Jimmy Smith
Director General
International Livestock Research
Institute



Dr. Judith Bryans
President
International Dairy Federation



Dr. Patricia Turner
President
World Veterinary Association



Rick White
Chair
International Agri-food Network



Robin Horel
President
International Poultry Council



Serge Leterme
Chairman
Diagnostics for Animals



Carel du Marchie Sarvaas
Executive Director
HealthforAnimals

European Signatories

Dr. Anders Karlsson
Head of Department
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Prof. Andrew Peters
Program Director, Supporting Evidence Based
Interventions (SEBI), Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary
Studies University of Edinburgh^{viii}



Birthe Steenberg
AVEC
Secretary General



Dr. Daniella Dos Santos
President
British Veterinary Association



Dawn Howard
Chief Executive
National Office of Animal Health

Dr. Dirk-Jan de Koning
Professor in Animal Breeding
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Prof. dr. ir. Frédéric Leroy
Professor of Food Science and Biotechnology
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Dr. Jana Picoka
Professor
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences



Jean-Louis Hunault
Président
SIMV

Dr. Jude Capper, CEO
Livestock Sustainability Consultancy



Karsten Maier
Secretary General
European Livestock and Meat
Trades Union

Dr. Mario Estevez
Associate Professor
University of Extremadura

Dr. Michael Lee
Professor of Sustainable Livestock Systems, University
of Bristol and Head of Sustainable Agriculture Sciences
– North Wyke, Rothamsted



Minette Batters
President
National Farmers Union
of England and Wales



Alexander Döring
Secretary General
European Feed Manufacturers'
Federation

Prof Nigel Scollan
Director, Institute of Global Food Security, Queen's
University Belfast



Pekka Pesonen
Secretary General
Copa-Cogeca



Dr. Philip Skuce
Principal Scientist, Moredun
Research Institute
KE Sector Lead for Livestock, SEFARI



Roxane Feller
Secretary General
AnimalhealthEurope

Dr. Stefaan De Smet
Professor, Department of Animal Sciences and Aquatic
Ecology, University of Ghent

Dr. Ulf Emanuelson
Professor
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

US and Canadian Signatories



Allan Ribbink
Chairman
Canadian Sheep Federation



Alexander Mathews
President and CEO
Animal Health Institute



Benoît Fontaine
Chairman
Chicken Farmers of Canada



Brian Bilkes
Chair
Canadian Hatching Egg Producers



Catharine Perry
Executive Director
American Dairy Science Association



Chad Gregory
President and CEO
United Egg Producers



Dr. Catherine Filejski
President
Canadian Animal Health Institute



Dr. Christian Klopfenstein
President
Canadian Association of Swine Veterinarians



Constance Cullman
President and CEO
American Feed Industry Association

Dr. Dan Thomson
Department Chair and Professor
Department of Animal Science
Iowa State University



Darren Ference
Chair
Turkey Farmers of Canada

Douglas A. Freeman DVM, PhD, Diplomate ACT
Dean, Western College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Saskatchewan

Dr. Ermias Kebreab
Associate Dean and Professor
University of California-Davis

Dr. Frank Mitloehner
Professor of Air Quality Extension Specialist
University of California-Davis, Dept. of Animal Science



Dr. Fred Gingrich
Executive Director
American Association of Bovine Practitioners and American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners



Jean-Michel Laurin
President and CEO
Canadian Poultry & Egg Processors Council

Dr. Jeffrey Wichtel
Professor and Dean
Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph



John Jamieson
President and CEO
Canadian Center for Food Integrity



John Ross
Executive Director
Canadian Pork Council



John Starkey
President
U.S. Poultry & Egg Association

Dr. Joy Mench
Professor Emerita
Department of Animal Science
University of California-Davis



Julie Anna Potts
President and CEO
North American Meat Institute



Kay Johnson Smith
President and CEO
Animal Agriculture Alliance

Dr. Ken Anderson
PhD Poultry Scientist



Melissa Dumont
Executive Director
Animal Nutrition Association of Canada



Pamela Griffin
Vice President
American National CattleWomen



Paul Zajicek
Executive Director
National Aquaculture Association

Dr. Richard Raymond
Former United States Department of Agriculture
Undersecretary for Food Safety

Dr. Robert Hagevoort
Co-Founder and Director of Development, U.S. Dairy
Education and Training Consortium



Roger Pelissero
Chair
Egg Farmers of Canada



Ryan Greir
Chair
National Sheep Network



Scott Helps
Chair
Egg Farmers of Ontario

Dr. Shanna L. Ivey
Ph.D., Department Head, Professor, New Mexico State
University, Departments of Animal and Range Sciences
and Extension Animal Science and Natural Resources

Dr. Yvonne Thaxton
Professor Emeritus, Director of the Center for Food
Animal Wellbeing, University of Arkansas

New Zealand Signatories



Prof. Pablo Gregorini
Professor of Livestock Production
Lincoln University Pastoral
Livestock Production Lab

**Endorsement of this letter by academic signatories does not necessarily reflect the views of their institutions*

ⁱ <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1157729/icode/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-chief-warns-hunger-pandemic-covid-19-spreads-statement-un-security-council>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/q-and-a/food-safety/en/>

^{iv} <https://www.oie.int/en/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019-novel-coronavirus/>

^v https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/ah_covid-19_qandas.pdf

^{vi} <https://www.nature.com/articles/nature06536>

^{vii} <https://www.oie.int/animal-health-in-the-world/the-world-animal-health-information-system/data-after-2004-wahis-interface/>

^{viii} Professor Peters views do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Edinburgh