

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.

Initially, 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.

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A Global Agenda of Action is being built around the notion that demand growth for livestock products will likely continue for decades to come, as incomes and human populations continue to grow. Such growth will need to be accommodated within the context of a finite and sometimes dwindling natural resource base, and will be faced with the need to respond to climate change, both adapting and mitigating.

Demand growth also presents opportunities for social and economic development that many developing countries would not want to miss. In addition, the livestock sector provides numerous opportunities for enhanced food security and livelihood support.

To ensure that such multiple promises for the livestock sector to contribute to society's environmental, social, economic and health objectives materialize, concerted sector stakeholder action needs to be mobilized towards the necessary changes in regulatory frameworks, policies, technologies, and supporting investments.

The development of a Global Agenda of Action heeds the call of these opportunities.

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A Global Agenda of Action in Support of Sustainable Livestock Sector Development is consensual and 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. Member countries, private sector, civil society, academia, research,

and international organization stakeholders have all been closely involved in broad stakeholder consultations to create awareness and to discuss and agree on the objectives, priorities, and conceptual framework of a Global Agenda of Action.

The initiative is linked closely to FAO's inter-governmental processes of its Committee on Agriculture (COAG), which during its 22nd session held in 2010 recommended that FAO actively engage in a global dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders to sharpen the definition of the livestock sector's objectives.

Two multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) meetings have thus far been held as part of the development of a Global Agenda of Action; the first in Brasilia, Brazil (17–20 May 2011), and the second in Phuket, Thailand (1–4 December 2011).

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The MSP endorsed natural resource use efficiency in the livestock sector, covering entire commodity chains, as the thematic centre of the Agenda, initially focussing on three areas, namely "closing the efficiency gap", "restoring value to grassland", and "towards zero discharge". The basic concept, or the main theory of change, underlying the Global Agenda of Action in each of these focus areas, is that resource use efficiency and thus sustainable development of the livestock sector can be achieved by an increase in the use of *human-made resources* and a concomitant reduction in the use of *natural resources* per unit of desired output. Whilst the relative emphasis and the approaches for each focus area will vary from region to region, each of the three focus areas presents specific 'game changing' opportunities to make large environmental, social and economic gains.



1. Growing demand, combined with dwindling natural resources, are increasing market uncertainty and have put natural resources prices on a long-term upwards trend, and are also causing increasing price volatility. Although the technological frontier continues to expand towards attainable efficiency gains at the margins, the bulk of producers continue to apply practices that are often greatly inefficient. The focus area *Closing the efficiency gap in natural resource use* suggests that the parameters determining the social and economic viability of the technological change in value chains and production systems have altered significantly and that large gains in resource use efficiency can be made by using available technology to close the gap between attainable and actual efficiency rates. The rationale is that closing a big efficiency gap with existing technology brings larger environmental, economic and social gains than incremental advances at the technological frontier.
2. Redefinition of desired outputs of agricultural production systems due to climate and demographic changes are driving the increased monetization of environmental services. To date, most of these payment schemes have restricted themselves to forests or areas of specific natural interest. The focus area *Restoring value to grasslands*, however, suggests that grazing land, if appropriately managed and enabled by institutional and policy change, can provide large resource benefits in the form of carbon sequestration, protection and provision of water services, and biodiversity protection. Carbon finance, and other forms of payment for environmental services, could equally be key in connecting people and production systems, in areas that have often been neglected, to opportunities to
- raise productivity and enhance livelihoods. Institutional change, including REDD-type financing mechanisms, is seen as key.
3. The increasing obligation to reduce the environmental impact of production systems in numerous countries makes the management of livestock manure increasingly critical. Nutrients and energy are only partially converted by the animal, and between 50 and 90 percent of the nutrients, and about 30 percent of the energy are excreted and often lost to the environment, leading to nutrient overloads and gas emissions. Whilst increasing regulation of direct discharge may require additional investments by producers, it also presents numerous opportunities to recover such costs. The focus area *Reduced discharge: Towards zero discharge* aims at recycling and recovering nutrients and energy contained in animal manure, particularly from intensive and confined livestock operations. Recycled nutrients help raise soil fertility and plant productivity and substitute for mineral fertilizer. Recovered energy reduces climate gas emissions and can substitute fossil fuel use. Central lines of action are thus proposed to include spatial planning to create opportunities for the application of animal manure on crops, the development of viable manure management systems, and public policies such as the development of incentive structures.

FROM VISION TO ACTION

A Global Agenda of Action is concerned with channelling knowledge to target areas, and the modification of incentives so as to enable change of practice. Such change of practice is required to accelerate sustainable growth in the livestock sector.

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To achieve this direction of change, both collective and independent action will be pursued with stakeholders bringing their relative strengths to bear on both. Collective action will include:

- a) the development of broadly accepted measures (“metrics”) of resource use efficiency and supporting methodologies;
- b) local to global resource use assessments and perspective studies;
- c) support to capacity building for technology, institutional and policy development;
- d) support to technology exchange, making use of private public partnerships and other appropriate organizational mechanisms;
- e) the piloting of novel approaches in order to provide “proof of concept” and support to investments; and
- f) the sharing of information, broad stakeholder communication and outreach.

A Global Agenda of Action is open to all stakeholders who agree with its objectives, its focus areas and the types of action. Stakeholders involved in the consultations emphasized the added value of multiple stakeholder collaboration in bringing about practice change that will lead to efficiency gains in natural resource use, while providing social, economic and health benefits.

NEXT STEPS

Focus area action programmes, as well as proposals for oversight and the specific form a Global Agenda of Action will take, are being shaped further through a series of workshops organized by the FAO Secretariat, in collaboration with the Global Agenda of Action’s Interim Preparatory Committee, stakeholder champions and other experts. The resultant draft focus area action programmes and a proposal for oversight and form will be ready for submission to the MSP by May 2012. Following this submission, individual stakeholder groups, organizations, regional bodies and commissions will report back to their broader membership for endorsement of a Global Agenda of Action.

At the same time, the FAO secretariat will seek COAG’s guidance in respect of FAO’s continued engagement in this multi-stakeholder initiative.

The MSP is expected to discuss and endorse the finalized action programmes before the end of September 2012, to be quickly followed by the ‘launch’ of the Global Agenda of Action in Support of Sustainable Livestock Sector Development.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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