

Innovation in animal health and sustainable livestock production in Europe: Two sides of the same coin?

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Press Release

With the European Commission's recently published proposal for a new common agricultural policy (CAP) deemed 'fit for the future', AnimalhealthEurope gathers parties with a stake in the future of livestock production in Europe to discuss the role of research and innovation in animal health, and to debate what future innovations are needed to ensure a resilient and sustainable livestock sector in Europe.



Keynote speaker Eleanor Riley, Director of the Roslin Institute at the University of Edinburgh – renowned for its pioneering 'Dolly the Sheep' clone - opened on a positive note about current research innovations, covering developments in animal genome modification and gene editing for producing disease-resistant animals, and welcoming changes in terms of fewer regulatory constraints and diminishing consumer concerns about innovative techniques. With the UK's future in an uncertain position, Professor Riley indicated that continued participation in EU research and innovation programmes is essential, and that future success is dependent on the best researchers continuing to collaborate with partners and sharing facilities across international boundaries.

Alongside Riley, Hans Nauwynck from the EU Horizon 2020-funded research SAPHIR project and Tomás Norton from Leuven University presented innovative techniques currently being piloted with livestock in Europe. Presenting new vaccine strategies for pigs and 'Precision Livestock Farming' technologies respectively, they demonstrated how continuous real-time monitoring of animal health and welfare, coupled with innovative vaccine strategies for endemic diseases, leads to better health management, creating healthier herds, reducing the need to use antibiotics to treat diseases, and reducing the overall impact on the environment through more sustainable use of resources.

A live interview with head of young farmers association, CEJA's Jannes Maes and Tom Tynan Head of Agriculture Commissioner Hogan's cabinet saw EurActiv's Sarantis Michalopoulos questioning how the new CAP proposal plans to support animal health management and sustainable production. Tynan lent his support to ongoing investment and support in animal health science and innovation, noting that it will contribute to the development of a more productive EU agriculture and food sector.

Related sectors joined the day's debate with interventions from panellists: Allan Buckwell from the Rural Investment Support for Europe (RISE) Foundation, Jan Venneman from European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders (EFFAB), Mateusz Rawski from HiProMine, a producer of insect-based animal feed, and Jean-Louis Peyraud from the Animal Task Force, a public-private platform promoting a sustainable livestock sector in Europe. Debating what innovations are needed in terms of animal health to support future livestock farming, and how food production will develop in the future, the consensus was that complimentary actions focusing on resource efficiency, integrated animal health management, responsible farming systems and knowledge exchange can all contribute to ensuring the implementation of new techniques, tools and practices to deliver innovation.

Concluding the day's discussion Roxane Feller, Secretary General of AnimalhealthEurope said, "The animal health industry in Europe is forging an innovation network to support and speed the implementation of forward-looking strategies for better animal health management. Getting the necessary actors around the table, sharing knowledge and ensuring the accessibility and affordability of innovative solutions for farmers, is what counts, if Europe is to integrate sustainable practices into its livestock farming sector. Public-private partnerships and continued funding from EU programmes like the new Horizon Europe are the way forward."

About the author

For further information please contact: Clare Carlisle, Public Relations Manager, c.carlisle@animalhealtheurope.eu [1] - +32 474 388711

Notes for Editors:

AnimalhealthEurope [2] is the representative body of manufacturers of veterinary medicines, vaccines and other animal health products in Europe. It represents innovators and generics alike, as well as large, medium-sized and small companies. AnimalhealthEurope promotes a single market in veterinary medicines across the EU ensuring the availability of medicines to protect the health and welfare of animals.

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