

## Event report

### *Sustainable EU Livestock: The way forward*

EU40, the network of young Members of the European Parliament, organised a debate entitled “Sustainable EU Livestock: The way forward”, where stakeholders from the field addressed how the EU can support the livestock sector as it strives to become sustainable: environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable.

The debate was hosted by **MEP Franc Bogovic** (EPP), **MEP Michela Giuffrida** (S&D), **MEP Daniel Dalton** (ECR) and **MEP Hannu Takkula** (ALDE).

The speakers included:

- **Luis Carazo Jimenez**, Head of Unit Animal Products, DG AGRI, European Commission;
- **Henning Steinfeld**, Chief of the Livestock Information, Sector Analysis and Policy Branch of FAO;
- **Jannes Maes**, Vice-President of CEJA (the European Council of Young Farmers);
- **Lynn Frewer**, Professor of Food & Society at Newcastle University;
- **Nan-Dirk Mulder**, Senior Animal Protein Analyst at Rabobank;
- **Lukasz Dominiak**, General Director of the Polish Poultry Council

During his keynote, **Luis Carazo Jimenez** explained that the EU will play a role in filling part of the gap in the context of an increasing global demand for animal products. What is needed, besides innovation at every stage, is stewardship of our natural resources, professional farmers, a better functioning of the chain, a committed food industry and a permanent dialogue with consumers. This development should be accompanied by proper policies.

For **MEP Daniel Dalton (ECR)** we need to look at innovation and technology. Research and development in agriculture is probably more relevant for the livestock sector than for any other sectors and we need to finance it.

**MEP Franc Bogovic (EPP)** considers that through innovation and good practices we would not only improve the sustainability of livestock production, but we can also attract young farmers. There is great opportunity to promote innovation in policies and help finance them. He also stressed the importance of farmers in Europe and globally getting a fair payment for their production. Here he sees opportunities for new technologies like platforms to connect producers and consumers.

**MEP Michella Giuffrida (S&D)** stressed during this series of debates the importance of animal welfare. This time, she highlighted that it is a minority of the EU farmers who do not practice good animal welfare and extending a bad image to the whole sector means giving the wrong information, especially for a sector which is already in crisis. She added that she would like to see farmers united in a true pact with the media to give information on agriculture which is based on facts, with critical sense and verifiable sources, but without judgment and above all without attacks.

For **Henning Steinfeld** there are many linkages between livestock and the Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs), including bringing political stability and having less migration. We have here a multi-objective process that involves multiple stakeholders and that we need to solve in an integrated way. On the topic of competition of feed vs food competition, he made the point that though one third of total cereal harvest ends up in the stomach of animals for livestock products, 80% of the feed that goes into livestock is not edible. Therefore, there is a net contribution of livestock products to the system by providing animal protein for human nutrition. He also suggested that Sub Saharan Africa is where we need to look at regarding the concerns due to the increasing demand of animal products.

**MEP Takkula (ALDE)** considers that animals are part of a bigger cycle; in EU politics we must also consider in the greenhouse gas (GHG) calculations the carbon sequestration achieved by livestock farmers, by including their cereal crops and grasslands. If we do so, the GHG for animal production is even. He also highlighted that sometimes discussions and scrutiny push livestock production outside of the EU and it should be the other way around. We are very much dependent on animal production outside of the EU.

**Jannes Maes**, a young dairy farmer mentioned that we have a huge climate debate which will result in policies and farmers should not be afraid to have those policies implemented in their farms. He believes that innovation can help find solutions in all three pillars of sustainability and for this, stable policies and funding are needed. For him, there is a big opportunity in communication to reconnect the urbanized areas in the EU with the livestock sector, to explain what farmers do and why they do it. Maes also welcomed the outcome of the Agriculture Market Task Force (AMTF) on how to strengthen farmer's ability to solve things by himself.

**Jan-Dirk Mulder** stressed how important is for livestock farmers to be cost competitive. Beside that focus on cost, it is important that stakeholders cooperate in strong value chains that are focused on markets.

**Lukasz Dominiak** pointed out that with the growth that the Polish poultry industry has had in the last years, the responsibility to make the sector more sustainable has been taken seriously. For him, myths about livestock production should be tackled through communication campaigns. For example, hormones are prohibited since 20 years in the EU and many people still think that chickens are given hormones. Likewise, communication is needed on how the sector is working for a responsible use of antimicrobials and implementing environmentally friendly practices.

All speakers agreed on the importance of communication bridging the trust gap between the livestock sector and the general public. **Lynn Frewer** highlighted that we need to understand what the public are worried about, like animal welfare, food safety, antibiotic resistance, human health and dietary choices. For her, we need to embed communication around these consumer concerns and also address issues in innovation and how innovation can address those concerns, as well as increase production.

**On the way forward and with an eye on the three pillars of sustainability, speakers and stakeholders in the sector suggested:**

- A holistic legislative approach. For legislators, different aspects are considered more important than others: for some it is the environment, animal welfare etc. It is not possible to solve any of the issues related to the livestock sector in a satisfactory manner without looking at it as a whole sector.
- Agriculture needs to be at the forefront of trade issues. Most of the growth of demand is outside of the EU and we need access to those markets. Products coming to Europe must meet our standards and if they do, we need to let them in.
- Funding for research and development is needed. For the livestock sector it is probably more relevant than for any other.
- The EU should work on the implementation of Research and Development (R&D) by farmers. Outcomes of R&D are sustainable only when they address current and potential needs.
- For an uptake of technology, the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) has tools that can be used. At the same time, the industry developing those technologies needs to make sure that they are affordable and that data is understandable for farmers and their advisors.

- Having stable policies at the European, regional or national level. A sector which is capital intense, like livestock, needs to be able to plan long-term, to pay back for their investments and to innovate.
- Funding and implementation of communication initiatives to reconnect the livestock sector with consumers. For this, working with stakeholders, including the media is key for a balanced approach where facts are communicated, while addressing consumers' concerns.

As a political response on the way forward towards a sustainable EU sector, MEP Franc Bogovic committed to work on getting understanding amongst MEPs colleagues in the AGRI Committee. He will be working on a Motion for a Resolution and hopes to get enough signatures and support at the plenary level.

*The EU livestock sector accounts for 42% of total EU agricultural activity, with an estimated €145bn output value annually and creates employment for almost 30 million people.*

*This debate is the third and last of a trilogy organised by EU40. The trilogy aims at underlying the importance of livestock specific actions as part of the current discussion on the need for innovation for a sustainable EU agricultural sector.*

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