WORLD FARMERS' ORGANISATION

Farmers ready to be part of the Sustainable Livestock Transformation

Statement of the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO) before the 2nd Global Conference on Sustainable Livestock Transformation

The World Farmers' Organisation (WFO) applauds the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for hosting the 2nd Global Conference on Sustainable Livestock Transformation. We fully support the conference's goals of advancing sustainable livestock systems to meet global food security and nutrition needs while addressing environmental, economic, and social challenges. As farmers' representatives worldwide, we are committed to ensuring livestock farming thrives as a cornerstone of sustainable development, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2014 Rome Declaration on Nutrition.

We believe that any ambitious transformation of the livestock sector must be supported by comprehensive strategies that build on existing achievements, offers targeted economic support to help farmers adapt and recover, and promotes investments that strengthen the sector long-term sustainability as well as global food security. Such a strategy must enable livestock farming to thrive across all territories to intermediate and highly productive zones where crop-livestock complementarities offer unique environmental and economic benefits.

Livestock is fundamentally important to global food security, providing essential micro and macronutrients, supporting livelihoods, and contributing to rural economies. With the world's population projected to reach 9.2 billion by 2050, the rising demand for animal-sourced nutrient-rich foods underscores the need for sustainable growth in livestock production. This growth must prioritise resource efficiency, resilience, and social equity, as outlined in WFO's Policy on Livestock. Critically, farmers must be at the heart of conversations about their farms and livelihoods. Policies and innovations must reflect their realities, ensuring economic viability and respect for local conditions.

Family farmers depend heavily on livestock for their income, food, and resilience. It strengthens household financial assets, offers a reliable income through the sale of animals and animal products, and provides a safety net in times of crisis. Livestock ownership empowers women and youth by giving them a tangible role in food production and income generation, thus contributing to social equity and inclusion.

We emphasise that no single farming system is superior; diverse systems—ranging from small-scale extensive to intensive specialized production—are vital to meet varied global needs. Each system plays a unique role in maintaining cultural landscapes, biodiversity, and food security. The WFO advocates for a One Health and One Welfare approach to address biosecurity, animal health, and welfare challenges. This holistic framework ensures the well-being of animals, humans, and ecosystems while tackling issues like antimicrobial resistance and zoonotic diseases, grounded in science-based standards such as those of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).

WORLD FARMERS' ORGANISATION Tel: +39 06 421291 - C.F:97662560586
Via del Tritone, 102 - 00187 Rome (IT) info@wfo-oma.org - Pec: wfo-oma@legalmail.it

The livestock sector must be fully recognised for its positive environmental contributions, including carbon sequestration through grasslands, sustainable nutrient cycling, and the potential of manure management and methanisation. Livestock-based mixed farming systems, when supported by appropriate investment strategies, can enhance both productivity and ecosystem services.

Livestock is also essential to agricultural sustainability. Beyond supplying high-quality animal-source foods that improve nutrition, livestock provide multiple co-benefits: manure for fertilization, traction for on-farm activities, and valuable by-products. These contributions support circular economies, promote input efficiency, and diversify farm incomes—helping small-scale farmers better manage economic risk and climate shocks.

Furthermore, decades of innovation in nutrition and management have significantly reduced the resource intensity of animal production—saving water, land, and reducing emissions per unit of output. Ruminants such as cattle, buffaloes, goats, and sheep and pseudo-ruminants such as camelids play a key ecological role by converting inedible forages from grasslands into nutritious products. When properly managed, grazing supports grassland biodiversity and soil health. This is particularly relevant given that grasslands cover over 25% of the planet's land surface and are home to nearly one billion people, often in marginal or non-arable zones.

Innovations are essential but must be practical and accessible, working on farms, not just in laboratories. Technologies and practices should empower farmers, enhance productivity, and improve market access. In this sense, investments in research, genetic improvement, and animal husbandry techniques must aim to strengthen the sector's resilience and autonomy while aligning with high standards of animal welfare and food quality. The WFO calls for inclusive dialogue, ensuring farmers' organisations are fully consulted in shaping sustainable livestock policies. Livestock policy can only be workable if farmers are fully engaged throughout the entire development process.

We must also recognise the importance of allowing room for diversity in market approaches and production models, avoiding over-standardisation that could exclude certain types of farms or limit innovation. Instead, farmers should be encouraged and rewarded for adopting high-level environmental and animal welfare practices, without being burdened by excessive regulatory constraints.

Together, let us seize this opportunity at the FAO conference to build a future where livestock farming meets growing global demands ethically, equitably, and sustainably, and contributes to sustainable food systems, economic resilience, climate action, and the vitality of rural territories — ensuring prosperity for farmers, communities worldwide.