



FAO global livestock report calls for policy reforms to improve performance

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Rome, Feb. 18 – More global food crises and riots are as close as the next floods or droughts in major food exporting countries. That’s the warning from the head of the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) who says the threat will continue to increase along with world population growth “unless we address the structural problems of increasing food production and productivity in developing countries.”

FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf told reporters at FAO’s Rome headquarters Thursday that the rapidly growing livestock sector “is a key factor in the fight against hunger and poverty. It contributes 40% of agricultural production and supports the livelihood of almost one billion people.” He stressed that addressing global food security issues requires investment. He welcomed last year’s commitment from developed countries to invest \$20 billion over the 2009-11 period. But he noted that unfortunately “we have not seen the money yet.”

Diouf pointed out that globally, “70% of the poor are in rural areas and their main livelihood is agriculture.” He said that to feed a world population forecast to grow from today’s 6.8 billion to over 9 billion by 2050, “we need to increase total world food production by 70% and in developing countries where we have hunger, we need to double the present production. We can’t do it without investment.” He said it’s vital to ensure that this investment “reaches farmers, to allow them to get seeds, fertilizers, animal feed, vaccines, small agricultural implements, to be able also to do small irrigation schemes, to get storage facilities at the village level, etc., these essential things that would allow them to produce food.”

Diouf called for new government policies to enable the livestock sector to improve its performance in terms of food security, poverty alleviation, nutrition, environmental sustainability, “mitigating climate change,” and “managing and preserving our natural resource base and ensuring better human health.” He added that “Disease risks can be managed better through better animal health systems that engage producers at all levels, including poor livestock keepers.”

Diouf was speaking to focus attention on the “Livestock in the Balance” section of the newest edition of FAO’s annual “The State of Food and Agriculture” report. (To read the FAO’s complete 180-page report, go to: www.fao.org/publications/sofa/en/.)

Regarding specific livestock issues, Diouf said:

- “At the global level there is growing recognition that agricultural development is crucial if we are to reverse the trends and start making significant and sustainable progress toward lifting millions of people out of poverty and hunger.”
- “In this context, the livestock sector, due to its size and growing economic significance, has a crucial role to play.”
- “Rising incomes have generated sustained growth in demand for animal products mainly in rapidly growing economies. The sector has responded by expanding production along with major technological developments and structural changes.”
- “Production especially of poultry and pigs is becoming more intensive, geographically concentrated, and vertically integrated.”
- “In many parts of the world the rapid growth and transformation has occurred in a setting of weak institutions and inadequate regulations. This has given rise to systemic risks affecting livelihoods, the environment, as well as human and animal health.”
- “The transformation of the sector has led to a widening gap between small livestock people and large commercial enterprises. A growing divide is emerging where large-scale industrial production serves dynamic growing markets while traditional pastoralists and small-holder producers risk marginalization.”
- “Livestock production, along with other human activities, is putting increasing pressure on ecosystems and natural resources – land, water, air, biodiversity.”
- “The increasing concentration of livestock production in close proximity to large human populations and the growing international trade in livestock and livestock products have increased the risk of animal disease outbreaks and the emergence of new animal-related human health threats as manifested in a series of recent outbreaks.”
- “The livestock diseases not only pose risks for human health, but they also generate heavy economic costs, especially for the poor who have less access to veterinary services and who may see their livelihoods threatened by disease outbreaks.”
- “The livestock sector has shown exceptional performance in delivering growing supplies of animal products to those who, due to higher incomes, are able to afford them. On the other hand, its performance in terms of poverty alleviation, environmental services, and human and animal health protection, calls for improvements.”

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#30