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Animal feed as an important contributor to promote animal health and wellbeing

The International Feed Industry Federation (IFIF) represents and promotes the global feed industry as an essential participant in the food chain that provides sustainable, safe, nutritious and affordable food for a growing world population.

IFIF recognizes the importance of tackling increasing global antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) have identified as a major threat to human and animal health. IFIF supports the initiative of the three organizations recognizing the need to have an overarching and multi-sectorial approach (“One Health” concept) in order to reduce the use of antimicrobials in a responsible and effective manner.

The feed sector plays a critical role in supporting animals’ optimal health with high resilience capabilities to stressors through safe and high-quality feed (feed formulation and processing) and access to nutritional innovation. It therefore is a key factor in the wellbeing of all livestock, fish and companion animals.

The feed sector is continuously securing a high level of feed safety to minimize animals’ exposure to microbial, chemical and other contaminants of concern. In addition, by providing adequate nutrition, (defined as the provision of well-balanced and well formulated feed), supporting an optimal gastro-intestinal tract functioning, and providing (micro)-nutrients, animals become more resilient to stressors and maintain a high wellbeing and health status, leading to a reduced need for antibiotics.

The gastro-intestinal tract is the largest part of the animal exposed to stressors and microorganisms and has one of the most developed innate defense systems. Nutritional solutions developed by IFIF members are aimed at supporting these defense systems and decreasing the impact of antinutritional factors and deleterious microorganisms on the animal, when adequately nourished. In addition, adequate nutrition also supports innate defense systems active in other parts of the animals, such as the respiratory tract. IFIF calls on regulatory bodies to enable and encourage the development and implementation of nutritional solutions that are aimed at supporting animals’ natural defense systems and resilience capabilities and to align communication activities in these areas.

IFIF strongly supports science-based risk assessments to assess the impact of changes in the antibiotics use in animals, when taking restrictive measures. IFIF supports the prudent use of antibiotics and acknowledges their critical role in the treatment of disease of farm and companion animals (aquatic and terrestrial) to minimize suffering. IFIF wants to stress that prudent use requires that other parameters are properly addressed through preventative strategies, i.e. good hygiene practice, measures improving biosecurity and resilience of animals to stressors through adequate nutrition.

IFIF is actively participating in the CODEX Alimentarius Task Force on AMR. This Task Force is charged, in the context of human health protection, to revise the existing Code of Practice to minimize and contain foodborne antimicrobial resistance and establish guidelines for the monitoring and surveillance of antimicrobial resistance development.

IFIF supports integrated multi-stakeholder approaches to the prudent use of antimicrobials and believes that meeting the demands of 60 % more food, including animal proteins in the future in a

safe and sustainable manner can only be achieved by working together with all stakeholders (e.g. governments, non-governmental groups and the private sector) in the feed and food chain.