

Contribution of livestock production to food and nutritional security and to the reduction of poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Dear colleagues and friends.

It is an honor sharing in this opening session of the most important meeting on Animal Sciences in Latin America with you, thanks to the kind invitation of the Organizing Committee of ALPA to whom I thank and as always, it is a pleasure to go back to Cuba and enjoy myself with the culture, human warmth and kindness of the Cuban people.

I would like to start reminding that last October 16 was celebrated the World Food Day, which was established by United Nations to highlight the importance of the right of every human being to feeding and the compromise of the States to guarantee the feeding and nutritional security of their population. As stressed by FAO, the only figure morally acceptable in the world, and of course in our region regarding hunger is ZERO. Regrettably, and in spite of all the efforts of the governments and of the academic and productive sectors, we have today in our region, an area exporting foodstuffs to the world, 47 million people suffering hunger (1 out of 12) and 7 million of children younger than 5 years suffering from chronic malnutrition and more than 3 million children with obesity problems.

The good news is that animal production and those of us linked to it from the productive sector, research, education, academy, technological development, public policies, international cooperation, can contribute and in fact we are already doing it, to the solution of these problems causing huge damage to the sustainable development of our countries.

However, in order to improve the impact of our action we must contextualize clearly the problem and contribute to the solution of the structural causes of feeding insecurity and malnutrition. As instituted by FAO, feeding and nutritional security is associated with four main factors: food availability (amount), access to foodstuffs (purchase capacity), supply stability (permanent) and utilization (quality, innocuity and consumption patterns).

A rapid analysis of these four factors regarding foodstuffs of animal origin in Latin America and the Caribbean would clearly indicate us where our efforts must be placed for improving the contribution of livestock production to feeding and nutritional security.

Livestock production has been increasing in the region

at annual rates higher than the average world growth (4.0 vs 2.1%) headed by poultry production growth. Poultry production has been duplicated during the last decade. Also, production of bovine and pig meat and milk has grown more than 30% in the same period. Latin America and the Caribbean generate higher percentage of the world production of cattle meat and poultry meat than the United States (USA), and contribute with the same proportion of milk. The productivity in the pig industry and in the poultry industry of LAC has not nothing to envy to USA productivity and it is substantially above the world average. Of course these advances in productivity are supported by efforts made in genetic improvement, feeding, nutrition, animal health, management and production organization, by many of whom are here today in this lecture hall.

Latin America exports 40 % of the total bovine meat commercialized at the international market. It is the region with highest exportations of poultry meat at world level and the third in pig meat. However, the production is concentrated in some countries. Three countries have more than 70 % of cattle and pig population, 64 % of dairy cows and 60 % of laying hens and broiler chickens. Only six countries of the region contribute with 98 % of the total exportations of livestock products (Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Paraguay). Brazil continues leading the exportations, 89 % of poultry meat, 71.6 % of the cattle meat exportation and 51.7 of pig meat exportations. Argentina has increased its exportations of poultry meat and is close to become the fourth world exporter of poultry meat after Thailand, Brazil and USA. However, the Caribbean countries and the majority of the Central America countries are net importers of animal origin foodstuffs.

Livestock products make each time a greater contribution to the diet and the nutrition of Latin America and Caribbean consumers. Consumption of poultry meat and dairy products has grown rapidly in many countries of the region. According to the OECD-FAO scopes, the consumption of dairy products of Brazil will surpass USA consumption in 2017. Other high milk consumers are Chile, Uruguay, Argentina and Mexico. Nevertheless, we have still in the region a high number of countries and, especially, vulnerable communities with very low consumptions of animal protein, associated

mainly with poverty conditions, not allowing the necessary incomes to purchase meat or milk. It is fully demonstrated that as economic incomes in a population improve, consumptions of meat, milk and processed livestock products increase.

In general terms, it can be concluded that in Latin America the problems of hunger, malnutrition and feeding insecurity are more linked to the access to foodstuffs (poverty) than to their availability. We have been successful in increasing the production. Now we have the challenge of defeating hunger, malnutrition and poverty. Undoubtedly, the livestock sector can contribute much more to this challenge for which progress toward a social production, economically and environmentally sustainable must be made.

Nonetheless the tendency to a greater intensification of pig, poultry and milk production, increases the risks over animal and public health, the animal welfare and the environment, and makes necessary to strengthen the veterinary services and environmental regulations to guarantee sustainable systems and healthy and innocuous products. Likewise, the high levels of deforestation and degradation of natural resources in cattle production zones make more vulnerable the production of grazing cattle to climatic change, reduce the productive efficiency and compel to develop systems of information and early alert as well as to develop adaptation strategies to climatic change. It is urgent to increase public and private investment on research, technological development and innovation to face these risks and improve the environmental sustainability of the production.

Many small producers of meat and milk of the region have not been benefited from the exporting boom and, in many cases have been forced to leave the business due to the serious productivity gaps, as a consequence of their limited access to credit services, technical assistance and training. It is urgent to develop differentiating policies, incentives and support strategies for the family livestock production in order to improve social sustainability of livestock production systems and their contribution to the reduction of poverty and the feeding and nutritional insecurity in rural zones. This theme will be analyzed by a panel in this Congress and since you will have the opportunity of participating in it I will not go into this topic in any depth. I would certainly like to state that there is a great opportunity of turning the family livestock production systems in rural development motors and of increasing their contribution to feeding and nutritional security as well as to the reduction of poverty. In order to achieve this, we must guarantee that this topic is in the political agenda of our countries and to promote the models of social and technological innovation that will allow to close the productivity gaps and facilitate the access of small producers to information, technology, credit and markets.

Finally, I would like referring to the outstanding

role that are obliged to fulfill those working in the field of animal sciences and livestock production for the sustainable growth of animal industry in our region. We need to continue contributing our support in the subject areas of feeding and animal nutrition, genetics and animal breeding, physiology and adaptation, production procedure and aggregating value, management of agroclimatic risks and adaptation to climatic change; animal welfare, biosecurity, agroecology, information systems and epidemiological surveillance, as well as agricultural economy, planning and economical models. All these are basic fields for the development of sustainable livestock production systems and for improving the efficiency in the use of resources for the production of foodstuffs of animal origin in Latin America and the Caribbean countries. At the same time, it is necessary to reinforce the home research systems, the transference of technology and innovation and to promote the conformation of multidisciplinary teams where our knowledge on strategic areas of animal sciences is promoted with the participation of social and economy specialists in order that our contribution will have the expected impact in terms of public policies and social and economic development.

Colleagues, I am sure that this meeting of ALPA will be a perfect opportunity to update ourselves with all the developments that many of you have achieved in the different fields of animal sciences in the region, and similarly, for creating the alliances, networks and necessary interchanges to continue contributing to this noble purpose of providing a healthy and innocuous foodstuff production of animal origin and to the feeding and nutritional security of our population.

Thanks a million and I wish you success!

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