Animal Medicines Australia

**Animal Medicines Australia**
ABN 76 116 848 344 / ACN 116 848 34
15 National Circuit
Barton ACT 2600, Australia

**T** +61 2 6257 9022
**E** enquiries@animalmedicines.org.au
**W** animalmedicines.org.au

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National Food Security Strategy
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Canberra
ACT 2601

Submission via haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/food-security-strategy website.

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: National Food Security Strategy: discussion paper**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the discussion paper on a National Food Security Strategy. Food security is vital for the health and wellbeing of all Australians. We are pleased to highlight the critical role of animal health and biosecurity in providing and protecting food security in Australia, as well as in many other countries that depend on Australia to produce safe, nutritious and affordable food.

Animal Medicines Australia (AMA) is the peak industry association representing the registrants and approval holders of veterinary medicines and animal health products in Australia. They are the local divisions of global innovators, manufacturers, formulators and registrants that supply essential veterinary medicines and animal health products that are critical to supporting Australia's $34 billion livestock industry and rapidly growing pet industry. Our members represent approximately 80% of registered veterinary medicine sales in Australia.

Australia's agricultural sector is a multi-billion-dollar industry that is critical to Australia's economy by enabling valuable global trade and market access in food commodities. Australia produces significantly more food than we consume, with around 70 percent of total agricultural production exported overseas.[1] Every year, each Australian farmer produces enough food for 600 people [2] and it has been estimated that, while our population sits at around 26 million, 61 million people will eat food produced in Australia.[3]

[1] Agricultural and food trade | Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
[2] Farm Facts - AustralianFarmers Farm Facts - AustralianFarmers
[3] How many people can Australia feed?

Animal health is critical to enable the production of safe, nutritious, available and affordable food to reliably support local and global food supply chains, and facilitate trade in agricultural commodities. Investments in animal health are essential to protect food security and meet the growing challenges posed by climate change, global population growth and health inequalities.

## The importance of animal-derived proteins

Animal-derived food is a vital source of nutrition for the global community. Meat, milk and eggs provide 1 in every 5 calories and 39% of protein consumed globally[4], and are an excellent source of nutritional protein and essential macro- and micronutrients.

Livestock production contributes directly to global food security and nutrition by producing more highly valuable nutrients for humans than they consume. According to the UNFAO, "cattle need only 0.6kg of protein from their feed to produce 1 kg of protein in milk and meat. Cattle thus contribute directly to global food security".[5] Livestock produce valuable food using materials that would otherwise go to waste - 86% of global livestock feed intake is composed of resources that are not suitable for human consumption, such as crop residues, grasses and seeds, and their manure returns nutrients to the soil. By-products such as wool, hides and skins provide natural resources for other sectors, and grazing animals enable food production on land that is unsuitable for crops.[6]

Animal-derived foods can further the efforts to reduce extreme poverty and hunger worldwide, and animal-derived foods should be regarded as an "inherent part of any food security policy".[7]

## The importance of animal health & biosecurity in food security

Animal medicines are essential tools for food security by enabling farmers to produce food efficiently, safely and affordably. Healthy livestock grow more efficiently, require fewer resources, and produce less emissions.[8] The use of animal medicines in Australia reduces the average prices of meat, eggs and dairy products for consumers by almost 13%.[9]

Animal diseases are a direct threat to food security, making nutrient-dense food more scarce and more expensive. The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) estimates that over 20% of animal production worldwide is lost every year as a direct result of disease and those that survive require more resources and may never produce as much as in their lifetime.[10] Every animal lost to illness and disease requires another to be raised elsewhere to meet market demand – representing resources spent that are not subsequently converted into food.

[4] More fuel for the food/feed debate (UNFAO)
[5] Animal Production and Health Division (NSA)
[6] Common-Principles-and-Actions-for-Sustainable-Livestock-Production.pdf
[7] Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
[8] Common-Principles-and-Actions-for-Sustainable-Livestock-Production.pdf
[9] AMA-Actions-in-Animal-Health-Sustainability-2022.pdf
[10] ANIMAL-HEALTH-EN-FINAL.pdf (WOAH)

All of Australia's major livestock industries, including beef, dairy, pork, sheep and poultry, focus on animal health and welfare in their sustainability frameworks and targets, reflecting the devastating impact disease outbreaks could have on the Australian livestock sector – and subsequently, the availability of safe, nutritious food for all Australians and those who rely on Australia's food exports.

Animal disease outbreaks raise the costs of farm input per unit of production, as well as resulting in declines in production that reduce food availability. This results in rising food prices, as was demonstrated during recent avian flu outbreaks in Australia. The cost of living crisis had seen many people turn to eggs as a more affordable source of protein. At the same time, multiple outbreaks of avian influenza occurred which required mass culling of flocks to eradicate. As the availability of eggs sharply declined with each outbreak, the price increased. Over two years of disease outbreaks (2023-2025), the price of eggs rose by 27%. This exceeded headline CPI inflation, which was 6% over the same period.[11]

Australia is in a unique position because many of the world's most devastating and debilitating animal diseases are not present here. Our strict biosecurity measures and systems help maintain this disease-free status, protecting animal health and welfare, public health, environmental health, food availability, quality and safety, and give Australia a strong competitive advantage in global markets.

Improving animal health through disease prevention, early detection and treatment of illness alongside access to veterinary care is central to achieving food security goals. Maintaining the health and welfare of Australia's livestock will be a critical component of achieving the National Farmers Federation's ambitious goal of Australian agriculture being a $100 billion sector.

## Meeting future challenges to food security

There are many communities worldwide who simply do not get enough food, including within Australia. The world has reduced the number of hungry people by over two hundred million over the past two decades, but the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that a staggering 820 million people still do not have enough to eat.[12]

The pressures on global food supplies will only increase. A growing population and a flourishing middle class mean protein production needs to double by 2050 to feed 1/3$^{rd}$ more people than we have today.[13] In a changing climate, feeding an increasing global population and meeting the nutritional demands of a burgeoning middle class sustainably is an enormous challenge that cannot be solved simply by increasing the size of production systems.

To continue to meet the growing demands for animal protein, both domestically and for our important export markets, Australian livestock farmers will be required to not only improve productivity, but also their efficiency – that is, improving productivity while simultaneously reducing their environmental impact, meeting changing consumer expectations and preferences, and ensuring their operations remain economically viable.

[11] ABS Monthly Consumer Price Index Indicator, April 2025
[12] The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021
[13] Animal Production and Health Division (NSA)

Protecting livestock and preventing loss to the food chain through disease will be of paramount importance. Healthy animals produce more meat, milk and eggs, thereby enabling farmers to meet the increasing demand for animal protein with fewer animals.

Veterinary workforce shortages in Australia poses challenges for animal health and food production, especially the shortage of rural and regional veterinarians. Registered veterinarians are essential to access many critically important veterinary medicines that prevent, treat and manage animal disease. Adequate access to veterinary services and the tools and technologies necessary to keep animals healthy is vital to protect animal health and welfare, food production and biosecurity.

The likelihood of more frequent and severe environmental conditions and natural disasters in future, such as drought, floods, fires and storms, bring with them an even greater need to protect animal health and welfare. In addition to animal injury and death, property damage and loss, and infrastructure disruption in the aftermath of a specific weather event, changing climatic conditions can pose threats to animal health by altering the distribution and behaviour of many animal and insect species. This, in turn, can lead to changing distributions of vector-borne diseases into new areas and immunologically naïve populations where that disease has not previously been detected.

Protecting animal health is integral to more sustainable food production. A recent Oxford Analytica report commissioned by HealthforAnimals, *Animal Health and Sustainability: A Global Data Analysis*[14], demonstrated that protecting animal health delivers critical sustainability benefits. The report found that every 1% reduction in livestock disease rates would increase production enough to meet the average annual meat consumption needs of 82 million people. Improving animal health and husbandry practices could also reduce greenhouse gas emissions from livestock by 16 to 30%. This would enable livestock producers to increase production to meet the needs of an additional 1.9 billion people without increasing current emissions. Other key findings of the report included:

- A 60% global vaccination rate for beef cattle in upper-middle income countries was associated with a 34.7% rise in production. This production benefit is equivalent to the beef consumption needs of 900 million people. The production benefit was even greater (52.5%) in low income countries, which could meet the consumption needs of 3.1 billion people.
- An outbreak of cattle disease affecting 20% of a herd was associated with an estimated 42% increase in greenhouse gas emissions in high-income countries.
- A 10% decrease in global livestock disease was associated with an 800 million tonne decrease in livestock greenhouse gas emissions. This is equivalent to the average annual greenhouse gas footprint of 117 million Europeans.
- A 40% global vaccination rate for cattle was associated with a 5.2% reduction in land required for livestock production. When 20% of poultry globally are affected by disease, 8.6% more land is estimated to be necessary to maintain production levels.

Globally, improvements in agricultural technologies including nutrition, healthcare, genetics, automated farming systems, GPS devices, thermal imaging and other new technologies have enabled a 20 percent reduction in land requirements for livestock while doubling production.[15]

[14] Animal-health-and-Sustainability-A-Global-Data-Analysis-FINAL.pdf
[15] Transforming the livestock sector through the Sustainable Development Goals

## Conclusion

Animal health and welfare is fundamental to food security and sustainable food systems. Healthy animals produce more meat, milk and eggs, enabling farmers to meet the increasing demand for animal protein with fewer animals. Animal medicines are critical tools that enable farmers to produce that food more sustainably - using less land and resources, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions – whilst protecting the health and welfare of animals in their care.

Agricultural production in Australia feeds millions of people around the world. Food security in Australia has implications that extend far beyond our national borders. Investments in animal health increase agricultural productivity and reduce the costs of food production, thereby supporting the availability of safe, affordable and nutritious food for all Australians.

We look forward to further consultation on the National Strategy in 2026. If you have any questions about the points raised in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Charmian Bennett
***Director Science and Regulatory Policy***