

Making the Case for Livestock:

HEALTH



The **health of animals and humans are intrinsically linked**. Addressing animal diseases can directly improve human health, particularly in the developing world. Livestock also indirectly contribute to **health goals** by supporting better livelihoods and therefore better dietary, educational and health choices.

ZOONOTIC DISEASES

- **Six out of every 10 human infectious diseases are likely shared with animals and 80% of this burden falls on low and middle-income countries.**
- **Zoonotic diseases transmitted from animals to people are strongly associated with poverty and cause huge human health burdens.**
- **Control of zoonotic diseases is highly economically attractive: every dollar invested in such interventions could generate five dollars' worth of benefits.**

Controlling zoonotic diseases, for example through comprehensive vaccination, has good returns on investments and important zoonotic diseases have been controlled in rich countries. Control interventions should prioritize the pathogens in the animal hosts.

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EMERGING DISEASES

- **New human diseases that come from animals already cost at least \$6.7 billion a year worldwide. If one of these were to become a major pandemic it could kill millions of people and cost more than \$1 trillion.**

Controlling and mitigating the risk of new emerging zoonotic diseases requires increased investment in surveillance, diagnostics, vaccines and in research on transmission mechanisms and their mitigation.

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FOODBORNE DISEASES

- **Animal-source foods are most often implicated in foodborne diseases, which cause at least 500,000 deaths every year.**
- **The health burden of foodborne diseases is comparable to malaria, HIV/AIDS or tuberculosis.**
- **Improving the safety of animal-source foods would reduce this risk and improve the availability of these most nutritious foods.**

Although the large health burden of foodborne diseases is known, in low- and middle-income countries, investments in food safety are a fraction of the investments in comparable health problems and much of this goes to export control, where the burden is least. Policymakers need better information on the human and economic costs of foodborne diseases in poor countries and on investment options for their control. More resources available at the global level should be channeled to developing countries that bear the largest foodborne disease burden.

Current food safety regulations and standards in low- and middle-income countries should be risk- and evidence-based rather than rule-based. The private sector should also be incentivized to help improve food safety and ensure stakeholder accountability.

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ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

- **Antimicrobial uses in agriculture contribute to the emergence of human and animal infections that are resistant to treatment. To reduce the amounts of antimicrobials used, farmers need alternatives and incentives to use them.**



Much larger quantities of antimicrobials, such as antibiotics, are used in animal production than in human health and their use is growing rapidly in emerging economies.

Research investments are needed on how drug-resistant pathogens from antimicrobial use in animal agriculture move to human populations. The current push to ban use of antimicrobials arises from a 'precautionary principle' approach. However, it is important to ensure that food safety is not endangered by too zealous reductions in antimicrobial use in livestock production. Additional research is needed to understand how to best balance these risks.

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