



Opening speech by Honourable Pieter Mulder,
Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
November 23rd, 2010
Johannesburg, South Africa



Programme Director,
Fellow Africans.

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning,
Bonjour,
Goeie more,
Dumela and
Welcome,

Programme Director, current challenges posed by climate change has introduced outbreaks of pestilence and diseases which were otherwise a rare occurrence. Earlier this year, we experienced an outbreak of Rift Valley Fever in South Africa which swiftly swept across farm lands killing livestock and sadly also lead to a few human deaths. But our response was swift and we succeeded to halt the

destruction. Our community of scientists worked hard to understand the outbreak and to develop vaccines as well as ways of ensuring that we are not caught off guard again.

Programme Director, by means of the OIE and its member countries, the world is managing global food needs of its over 6 billion inhabitants through improved animal health.

South Africa is one of the founder members of the OIE in 1924 and it is thus fitting that this seminar is hosted by South Africa. This is against the backdrop of the successful Football World Cup held for the first time on the African continent.

Animal health is of extreme importance, as production animals form a major source of food for the human population. For many years, our fore-bearers kept high quality indigenous livestock to sustain their dietary needs. Indeed, through an indigenous knowledge system, they tendered to the domesticated animals keeping them well.

Programme Director, the South African Government placed high on its agenda, the importance of a healthy nation. Ranking second and fourth, in the five medium term strategic framework, is the government's focus on ensuring a healthy nation and the provision of food security for all.

Clearly the basic fundamental principle reigning in this regard starts with a healthy population of livestock.

Our aim is on strengthening research and development efforts through adequate resourcing of our institutions, namely; the *Agricultural Research Council (ARC)* and the *Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP)*. This focus will ensure that we do not run into any danger of the introduction and use of unsafe, ineffective and bad quality veterinary products because they are cheaper. The Government has committed ZAR 205 million in support of research and development through the *Agricultural Research Council (ARC)*.

It is essential to combine forces in Africa to ensure that our livestock is healthy, thus ensuring food security for all. Our government has realized the importance of *Extension Service Support* in this regard. Based on studies to improve this service, we shall be embarking on a process of outsourcing this function to ensure efficiency while we engage in training and re-skilling of the internal competencies.

African countries need to stand together to ensure that we obtain good quality veterinary medicines, customized to address the needs of the African continent. The time is now that as Africa, we can apply modern resources and technology to hurl our capabilities into a higher status.

What would 2050 look like in terms of food security?

In 1950 the world population was 2,5 billion people; in 2000 it was 6 billion and according to von Braun (Lohmann Information, October 2010), the world population of 2050 is predicted to be more than nine billion.

Once we clearly understand the deliverables needed in 2050 - we will be in a better position to come up with the right solutions.

Some predictions:

The world's farmers will have to produce 2% more food every year in total 50% more by 2030 and double production again by 2050... if we hope to keep pace with a growing population and increased nutritional demands, as millions of people in the developing world climb out of poverty and enter the global middle class.

In just twenty years, we are going to have to produce 50 percent more of what we produce today.

And we have only one planet to do it on.

The question that confronts all of us - on a global scale - is how do we increase agricultural production without vastly increasing the problems of soil erosion, the pollution of streams and waterways, and destroying what's left of the world's natural habitat. Increasing food production sustainably is the central, overriding, and defining issue of agriculture today.

What is the solution then?

You might think that managing all of these pressures seems like an impossible dilemma. But we can change this zero-sum equation through technology, through research and education.

It is technology, research and knowledge-sharing which allow us to break through the limits to growth, creating greater and greater output with the same or reduced inputs. This places a huge responsibility on all of us and emphasizes the important role you play.

The human population has more than doubled since 1960. Some domestic animal populations did however grow more rapidly than people did. The world chicken population is five times what it was in 1960 and it is predicted to increase further from currently 19 billion to at least 30 billion by 2015. The number of pigs and goats roughly kept up with the human population growth, whereas cattle and sheep populations have grown at a lesser rate.

The composition of the world animal herds is changing, and the good news is that the herd structure is changing towards better feed efficiency. This explains why there are more chickens and relatively more pigs, but fewer cattle and sheep.

With the increase in people there will be more demand for meat, milk and fish. The depressing news is that hunger has increased during the past few years in the world. According to recent *Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)* estimates, the number of undernourished people is approximately one billion. This estimate only refers to calorie-deficient nutrition; a much larger number suffers from protein and micro-nutrient deficiency.

Protein and energy malnutrition is much more acute in Africa where most of the hungry people in the world are located. It is also the continent where the majority of trade sensitive diseases are found. It traps us in an intractable position when trying to grow animal production as these animals are invariably prone to diseases and therefore do not survive long enough to reach slaughter weight.

Programme Director, this places huge responsibilities on yourselves to ensure that drugs that are put forward for registration are cheaper and therefore accessible to farmers. Farmers should also be well

trained to recognize disease and able to intervene before seeking help from animal health workers, be they animal health technicians or veterinarians.

Livestock and its inputs are a growing economic sector. The livelihood and income effects of the livestock economy are huge. More than a billion people keep livestock, 60% of rural households do so. We need to turn our smallholder farmers to become entrepreneurs and shift away to keeping livestock as a walking bank.

They need to use these animals to the benefit of communities and ensure that we lift Africa out of the state of underdevelopment, poverty and hunger. We do know, based on our experiences in South Africa, that livestock is a major source of income for the poor and especially women in developing countries.

The commercial farming with livestock is also an essential part of ensuring food security and a healthy economy. These commercial farmers should be protected and given the necessary support from the Government to so doing ensure food safety and security for the masses of people in Africa who are urbanized.

Access to good quality veterinary medicine is therefore an absolute necessity to ensure, support and sustain the increased livestock production.

Increased livestock production, although important for food security, also poses dangers: increased human/animal interface which could lead to the increased risk of the transmission of animal diseases to humans. Examples include avian influenza and tuberculosis. This can only be controlled by the intervention of veterinary medicines.

Africa is not an isolated continent any more, but is part of the 'global village' and the global economy. There is an increased movement of people and also foodstuffs. Stricter measures will have to be employed in controlling residues of medicines in food products. Harmonization measures will greatly assist to ensure the control of residues and thus facilitate trade opportunities.

Training is, in closing, essential to ensure that all the countries in Africa have access to safe, effective and good quality veterinary products, thus contributing to food security on the continent.

Healthy animals will mean healthy humans!

The programme of this course will specifically address the needs identified. I thus wish all the delegates a very fruitful training course and I thank all the speakers who are participating in this course for sharing their knowledge.

I thank you.

