Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Allow me to deliver the remarks on behalf of Dr Patrice Talla, the FAO Sub-regional Coordinator for Southern Africa and FAO Representative for Zimbabwe, Eswatini, and Lesotho

at

the opening ceremony of the regional workshop on AMR in aquaculture for English speaking African countries

13 August 2025

Harare, Zimbabwe

I wish to recognize the presence of

- The Honourable Deputy Minister for Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Rural Development, Zimbabwe, Honourable Davies Marapira
- Dr. Pious Makaya, Chief Director of the Directorate of Veterinary Services of Zimbabwe
- Directors of Veterinary services and Directors of Fisheries
- Distinguished representative from WHO, WOAH, FAO and UNEP
- Experts from Quadripartite Organizations,
- Invited guests

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is both an honour and a responsibility to address you today on an issue of global urgency: antimicrobial resistance, or AMR.

AMR is not solely a health issue. It is a development challenge that affects productivity, food systems including aquaculture, and global sustainability. AMR undermines progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and r disproportionately affects vulnerable populations.

Each year, an estimated five million deaths are associated with drug-resistant infections. The misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in human medicine, livestock, aquaculture, and crop production are driving the emergence and spread of resistant pathogens.

If we fail to act, we risk losing the ability to treat infections and to ensure safe, sustainable, and nutritious food production, including from aquatic systems.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) addresses antimicrobial resistance through its support to member states and partners under the Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, and the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031. This framework promotes the transformation of agrifood systems to be more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable, toward better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life for all, leaving no one and no place behind.

FAO operates within the Quadripartite collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), applying a One Health approach that recognises the interconnectedness of human, animal, plant, and environmental health.

FAO supports countries through four strategic pillars:

1. **Awareness and Advocacy** – Promoting understanding among policymakers, farmers, and veterinarians of the risks and responsibilities linked to antimicrobial use.
2. **Surveillance and Monitoring** – Assisting countries in generating and managing data on antimicrobial use and resistance in agriculture and food systems.
3. **Good Practices and Stewardship** – Encouraging disease prevention through vaccination, biosecurity, and improved hygiene to reduce the need for antimicrobials.
4. **Governance and Policy Support** – Helping countries develop science-based policies and regulatory frameworks tailored to national priorities.

Aquaculture is the fastest-growing food production sector globally and a vital source of income and nutrition for millions. As part of its Strategic Framework, FAO promotes Blue Transformation, which outlines a vision to expand aquatic food systems and increase their contribution to nutritious and affordable healthy diets, ensuring environmental stewardship and inclusive growth, especially for those communities that depend on fisheries and aquaculture. Leaving no one behind. However, in many regions, antimicrobial use in aquaculture often lacks adequate veterinary oversight.

This increases the risk of:

- Drug-resistant aquatic pathogens
- Contamination of water systems
- Transfer of resistance genes between organisms, including those that affect humans

FAO's Key Activities and Initiatives in Aquaculture AMR includes:

Reducing the Need for Antimicrobials on Farms (RENOFARM):

This is an initiative that focuses on preventing the conditions that lead to antimicrobial use. It supports farms in adopting better biosecurity, hygiene, animal health, nutrition, and management practices. RENOFARM aims to reduce disease occurrence and, in doing so, reduce the demand for antimicrobials, while supporting productivity and sustainability.

InFARM System:

The FAO International Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring (InFARM) system is a flagship initiative that supports countries in collecting, analyzing, and utilizing AMR data from livestock, fisheries, and aquaculture.

National Action Plans:

FAO assists countries in developing and implementing National Action Plans (NAPs) on the prudent and responsible use of antimicrobials in aquaculture.

Strengthening Surveillance:

FAO works to establish and strengthen operational national AMR surveillance systems, providing tools and guidance for data collection and analysis.

Capacity Building:

FAO conducts training programs and workshops to enhance the knowledge and skills of Competent Authorities, farmers, and other stakeholders on AMR-related issues in aquaculture.

Promoting Responsible Use:

FAO promotes the responsible and prudent use of antimicrobials in aquaculture through various initiatives, including the Progressive Management Pathway for Improving Aquaculture Biosecurity (PMP/AB).

Research and Development:

FAO supports research on AMR in aquaculture, including identifying sources of AMR genes and assessing risks associated with different aquaculture practices.

Collaboration:

FAO collaborates with other international organizations like the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) (formerly OIE) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in a Tripartite initiative to address AMR in a coordinated manner.

Codex Alimentarius:

FAO supports the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which develops international food standards, including those related to AMR in aquaculture.

Call to Action

Addressing AMR in aquaculture requires coordinated and targeted efforts. We call on:

- **Governments** to strengthen national action plans and enforce regulations on antimicrobial use in aquaculture
- **Producers and industry** to adopt responsible practices and improve biosecurity
- **Researchers** to develop practical diagnostics, vaccines, and prevention tools for aquatic systems
- **Communities and service providers** to promote awareness and good husbandry
- **Development partners** to support long-term investment in sustainable aquaculture systems

In closing, inaction in aquaculture risks undermining food safety, environmental health, and livelihoods. By working together to improve practices and reduce

the need for antimicrobials, we can build a more sustainable and resilient aquatic food system.

FAO stands ready—**with tools, expertise, and unwavering commitment**—to work alongside all of you in the fight against antimicrobial resistance. I wish to take this opportunity to wish well during your deliberations.

Thank you for your attention!