AFRICAN LIVESTOCK PRODUCTIVITY AND HEALTH ADVANCEMENT

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Livestock production on smallholder farms (<5 hectares) is the most prevalent form of agriculture globally and produces over half of the global protein supply. Yet countries with large numbers of these farms are also home to half of the world’s undernourished population, with the majority of people living in absolute poverty.

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has some of the highest human population growth rates in the world with up to a five-fold increase in population expected in some SSA countries by 2100. Nigeria’s population is set to outgrow the United States by 2050 and become the third most populous country in the world.

Fifty percent of the people in SSA who live on less than $1 a day depend on livestock, which provides 43% of the total family income. Livestock are an essential asset to rural communities, and the health of livestock is critical to achieving food security in regions where there is exceptionally high incidence of livestock and human disease. In order to ensure rising food and nutrient needs are met, livestock farming productivity must be improved. However, there are serious constraints to livestock farming and severe limitations in the animal health sector overall, including:

- Lack of access to high-quality veterinary medicines and products
- Poor veterinary extension services in rural communities, resulting in low medicalization rates and high disease incidence
- Limited diagnostic infrastructure for animal disease detection and intervention
- Poorly regulated veterinary product supply networks, coupled with lack of education, results in incorrect animal health product use and subsequent ineffectiveness of medicines.

Zoetis is confident that solutions are available and significant progress can be made through collaboration between business, governmental authorities, local veterinary and farmer associations and NGOs.
In May 2017, Zoetis announced a commitment to develop sustainable livestock production in SSA through the A.L.P.H.A. initiative and a $14.4M, three-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The A.L.P.H.A. initiative, launched in Uganda and Nigeria in 2017, followed by Ethiopia in 2018, will advance livestock health and productivity in SSA through increased availability of veterinary medicines and services, and the implementation of disease diagnostics infrastructure. To ensure the initiative is sustainable, Zoetis will incorporate the development of veterinary laboratory networks and outreach services into business hubs in Ethiopia, Nigeria and Uganda.
THE A.L.P.H.A INITIATIVE HAS SEVEN OBJECTIVES:

1. Improved availability of veterinary medicines through novel product registrations to extend the number of veterinary treatments available for livestock diseases;
2. Adaptation of product packaging/volume for selected products to ensure affordability and practicality for the smallholder market;
3. Investment in the development of a certified local distributor network, including distributor training to ensure correct and responsible veterinary product use;
4. Organization of outreach services for rural communities to improve medication rates of livestock, and deliver community education regarding animal disease to demonstrate the potential of animal health to maximize profitability of smallholder farming.
5. Provision of a fully operational, sustainable diagnostic infrastructure delivered in conjunction with local partners to improve the correct diagnosis of major livestock production diseases and increase correct and responsible use of veterinary products;
6. Support of local veterinary stakeholders with professional development/business training courses;
7. Outcomes research driven by epidemiological studies to demonstrate the return on investment of animal health for local communities, with results communicated in educational resources designed for maximum accessibility for local farmers.

Throughout this initiative, Zoetis will collaborate with local stakeholders including governmental authorities, local veterinary associations, national and international NGOs, farmers associations, private sector distribution companies, and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) to ensure maximum positive and sustainable impact to the region.

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REFERENCES


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