THE DENVER CALL FOR ACTION

THE DUBLIN DECLARATION

In October 2022, the Dublin Declaration of Scientists on the Societal Role of Livestock was initiated during the International Summit on the Societal Role of Meat, held in Dublin. The Declaration has since been signed by more than 1,200 scientists from around the world, each verified to hold relevant scientific credentials. The Declaration begins with the words:

"Livestock systems must progress on the basis of the highest scientific standards. They are too precious to society to become the victim of simplification, reductionism or zealotry. These systems must continue to be embedded in and have broad approval of society. For that, scientists are asked to provide reliable evidence of their nutrition and health benefits, environmental sustainability, socio-cultural and economic values, as well as for solutions for the many improvements that are needed. This declaration aims to give voice to the many scientists around the world who research diligently, honestly and successfully in the various disciplines in order to achieve a balanced view of the future of animal agriculture."

Today, two years later, these words have lost none of their importance. Renewed urgency led to this Denver Call for Action.

CALLING FOR NOURISHMENT-ORIENTED POLICY

Widespread discreditation of meat, dairy and eggs must cease so that we can return to fully evidence-based and economically and culturally appropriate dietary guidance that nourishes and respects the people consuming and producing those foods instead of harming them.

We observe a trend in policymaking to deploy patronizing approaches aimed at restricting dietary choice involving nudging, pressuring, and taxing consumers away from consuming proven nutrient-dense animal-sourced foods far beyond what can be justified as reasonable dietary interventions. It is worrying that proposed "substitutes" are nutritionally incomparable and often inadequate, devoid of the flavors and textures people desire. Moreover, they are often ultra-processed (e.g., *faux* 'meat' and 'dairy'), culturally inappropriate (e.g., insects in regions where their consumption is met with resistance), or unscalable (e.g., tissue-engineered muscle).

Large parts of the global population, in rich and poor countries alike, are malnourished. Nutrient deficiencies, cardiometabolic diseases, auto-immune disorders, and mental illnesses have been increasing at alarming rates. These major public health challenges remain under-addressed, while the affordability of nutritious foods that would make a positive difference has decreased. Some of the current global policy priorities even worsen matters, as exemplified by the deliberate tearing apart of global trade matrices. Policymakers must prioritize human well-being first, or they risk losing their authority to make policy at all.

CALLING FOR RECOGNITION OF SYSTEM COMPLEXITIES IN LIVESTOCK AND ECOLOGY

We call on policymakers to reject overgeneralizing portrayals of livestock systems as inherently harmful to the planet; moreover, such judgements need to be consistent with holistic approaches to ethical, economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Planetary resources are now stretched to the limits or beyond. To protect natural resources and improve respect for animals, managers of livestock production systems can, should and will act based on evolving scientific insights. However, it is unhelpful to overstate livestock's footprint or to approach environmental sustainability in a reductionist manner based on single elements and metrics. Only through broad evidence-driven assessments can the complex contributions to society and nature that well-managed animals provide in terms of nutrient availability, biodiversity, hydrology, soil fertility and other ecosystem services be recognized.

Oversimplified one-size-fits-all assumptions and inappropriate or unusable data are not suitable guides to policy. The frequently pronounced notion that the agricultural sector can be easily transitioned to a new state of climate neutrality by decimating or eliminating livestock, is not only dangerously misconceived but also not solicited by most of the public. Regulatory approaches and financial mechanisms to dramatically downsize animal production are usually hidden away from the public eye, not least because they could trigger hostile reactions from communities already experiencing fragile food supply systems.

CALLING FOR HIGH STANDARDS OF EVIDENCE AND RESPECT FOR SCIENCE

We encourage policymakers to listen carefully to those scientific commissions and expert panels where the *totality* of the evidence is presented, outlining what is known and what is not known; and where the function of scientists is to challenge each other through the application of the scientific method, with respect and openness.

Policymakers who take responsibility for their choices based on rigorous and honest scientific discourse will gain the trust of their electorates through the objectivity of their decision-making. Including and engaging with the broader views that fill the scientific and societal spectrum makes policies robust and impactful in driving positive outcomes that are better for people, animals, and the environment.

The Dublin Declaration has emboldened scientists to alert policymakers and the public to the importance of basing food policy on sound scientific evidence. They do so conscientiously and at the personal cost of becoming the target of activist campaigns, resulting in unsubstantiated accusations of "Industry bias" and other attempts to discredit inconvenient scientific voices. Despite diverse perspectives among the Declaration's signatories on how we might best implement scientific findings or what the nature and size of future livestock systems should look like, there is firm agreement on the critical importance of upholding rigorous standards of evidence, ethics and informed debate.

THE CALL FOR ACTION

"Livestock systems must progress on the basis of the highest scientific standards. They are too precious to society to become the victim of simplification, reductionism or zealotry." This first sentence of the Dublin Declaration prompted scientists on the occasion of the Second International Summit on the Societal Role of Meat and Livestock in Denver in October 2024, where the state-of-the-art scientific evidence was reviewed and updated, to issue this Call for Action.

This calls on policymakers worldwide to commit themselves to plurality and rigor in evidence-based decision-making. Meeting the massive challenge of nourishing global populations while minimizing environmental harm, will only be achieved through the transparent application of the scientific method, steering clear of hubris, presumptuousness, and dogma.

DENVER, THE 31ST OF OCTOBER 2024

Prof Dr Wilhelm Windisch, Prof Dr Robyn Warner, Prof Dr Alison Van Eenennaam, Prof Dr John Thompson, Prof Dr Alice Stanton, Prof Dr John Scanga, Prof Dr Jason Rowntree, Dr Andrea Rosati, Prof Dr Jane Quinn, Prof Dr Guiseppe Pulina, Dr Rod Polkinghorne, Prof Dr Sara Place, Prof Dr David Pethick, Prof Dr Mahesh Nair, Dr Fabio Montossi, Prof Dr Frank Mitloehner, Prof Dr Andy Milkowski, Prof Dr Heinz Meissner, Dr Pablo Manzano, Prof Dr Neil Mann, Prof Dr Carol Lorenzen, Prof Dr ir Frédéric Leroy, Prof Dr Michael Lee, Prof Dr Steven Lonergan, Prof Dr Ian Lean, Prof Dr Kim Stackhouse-Lawson, Prof Dr Alexa Lamm, Dr Mohammad Koohmaraie, Collette Kaster, Prof Dr Anders Karlsson, Dr Jean-François Hocquette, Prof Dr Craig Gundersen, Prof Dr John Gilliland, Dr Mohammed Gagaoua, Prof Dr Mario Estévez García, Prof Dr Bjørg Egelandsdal, Prof Dr Peer Ederer, Prof Dr Frank Dunshea, Prof Dr Robert Delmore, Prof Dr ir Stefaan De Smet, Dr Mariana De Aragão Pereira, Prof Dr Antonella Dalle Zotte, Prof Dr H. Russell Cross, Dr Paolo Colombani, Prof Dr Keith Belk

EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT

- Dublin presentations: https://www.teagasc.ie/food/food-quality-and-sensory-science/meat-technology/international-meat-summit/
- Dublin videos: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdcRN-ArFOFjHlxD-N2pNGHNI_LL4GbDR
- Denver presentations and videos: https://societalroleofmeat.org/
- Animal Frontiers, Special Issue, 2023: https://academic.oup.com/af/issue/13/2
- Animal Frontiers, Special Issue, 2025: https://academic.oup.com/af/pages/animal-frontiers-themed-issues
- ALEPH2020: https://www.aleph2020.org/
- GOALSciences: https://goalsciences.org/
- The GIST: https://www.thegist-aa.org
- Nourishment Table: http://www.nourishment-table.org/