

Country progress and political action on AMR in agri-food systems: Building towards the high-level meeting on AMR in 2024



GLOBAL LEADERS GROUP
ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

The Global Leaders Group on Antimicrobial Resistance hosted a virtual side event during the United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment.

24 July 2023

In advance of the United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on AMR in 2024, the Global Leaders Group (GLG) on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) continued its advocacy and awareness raising activities by hosting a virtual side event on July 24, 2023 during the United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment +2 in Rome. The side event, which drew 180 participants from more than 57 countries, was moderated by Ms Maria-Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and featured a panel of expert speakers, including three members of the GLG and Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Resettlement, Zimbabwe.

On behalf of FAO Director General Dr QU Dongyu, Ms Semedo delivered his special remarks. She noted that agri-food systems are where the health of people, animals, plants, and ecosystems converge, and that overuse and misuse of antimicrobials in these systems are major contributors to the development and spread of AMR. Combatting AMR will be part of the transformation of the agrifood systems. She highlighted several areas in which FAO is helping to tackle AMR based on the FAO Action Plan on AMR 2021-2025, including surveillance activities, a new 10-year initiative to reduce the need for antimicrobials in agri-food systems. Ms Semedo emphasized that FAO is leading the establishment of the AMR Multi-Stakeholder Partnership Platform in collaboration with the Quadripartite organizations. This global, inclusive and collaborative mechanism unites stakeholders from across the One Health spectrum.

- Dr Anxious Jongwe Masuka, Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Resettlement of Zimbabwe, highlighted efforts in Zimbabwe to tackle AMR in the agri-food sector, including through a One Health, multisectoral, whole-of-government approach; surveillance; and behaviour change and capacity building among farmers with a strong emphasis on use of indigenous knowledge and farming practices.
- Dr Guilherme da Costa, Federal Agricultural Auditor at the Secretariat of Trade and International Relations in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in Brazil, and member of the GLG, presented an overview of activities to tackle AMR in Brazil, beginning with the establishment of an AMR Prevention Commission in his ministry in 2016 and continuing with AMR prevention programs in animal and human health. PAN-BR-AGRO is a public-private partnership that promotes good practices and provides knowledge and training to ensure rational use of antimicrobials in the animal protein production sector. The program also includes activities related to surveillance, and infection prevention and control and supports economic arguments for sustainable investment in new drugs, diagnostics, vaccines and other interventions. Dr da Costa noted that Brazil has eliminated the use of medically important antimicrobials for growth promotion in animals.

- Dr Jamie Jonker, Chief Science Officer of the US National Milk Producers Federation and member of the GLG, emphasized that any use of antimicrobials in agri-food systems contributes to the risk of AMR, reducing the need for the use of antimicrobials is critical. He noted that because there are many diverse elements to agri-food systems, a range of different approaches based on local priority actions is needed to respond to AMR, and highlighted the importance of incorporating relevant CODEX and WOAHA standards and guidelines related to AMR into national action plans and legal frameworks. He called for determined efforts to ensure that agri-food systems with all aspects and the One Health approach are part of the dialogue leading up to and during the 2024 UNGA High-level Meeting on AMR.
- In her remarks, Ms Sunita Narain, Director-General of the Centre for Science and Environment in India and member of the GLG, discussed opportunities for reinventing agri-food systems in a way that addresses the linked challenges of increasing food production and nutrition, protecting livelihoods in the agri-food sector, addressing climate change, and tackling AMR. All these challenges require a focus on increasing the resilience of agri-food systems in a way that is affordable and sustainable and should include close attention to infection prevention and control. She noted opportunities through increased investment in traditional medicines and agricultural systems to address these challenges, our need to change our approach towards nature, climate, water, which will all lead to us achieving our common goals.

During the panel discussion, panellists fielded questions about ways to incorporate indigenous knowledge and practices into agrifood systems to help tackle AMR; opportunities for greater collaboration between high-income and low-and-middle income countries; the role of the private sector in responding to AMR; the importance of working with farmers to promote biosecurity, animal nutrition and prevention; the importance and ways to promote change of habits for antimicrobial use for diseases, water security for farmers and approaches to sustainable water use; and ways to reduce over-the-counter and illicit sales of antimicrobials, including through improved access to veterinary and paraprofessional services.

Closing the event, Ms Semedo emphasized that a wide range of approaches is needed to tackle AMR in agri-food systems; that “one size will not fit all” countries’ needs and that it is important to adopt integrated approaches across sectors.

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