



Our Ref.:

Your Ref.:

Rome, 7 April 2020

Dear Mr Horel,

I have the pleasure to refer to your letter addressed to Dr QU Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), dated 25 March 2020, regarding the concerns of the International Poultry Council (IPC) on the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak on the poultry meat sector.

FAO recognizes the important role that the poultry sector plays in global food production systems and human consumption, as the sector now contributes to about 37 percent of the world total meat production and nearly 40 percent of international meat trade. The livelihoods of millions of people around the world, especially in developing countries, as well as various auxiliary services, depend on the continuity and sustainability of the sector.

FAO shares IPC's concerns about the pandemic's impacts on food security and agriculture. Border closures, quarantines, and market, supply chain and trade disruptions could restrict people's access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, especially in countries hit hard by the virus or already affected by high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition.

As you mentioned in your letter, we are already seeing challenges in terms of the logistics involving the movement of food and the pandemic's impact on the livestock sector due to reduced access to animal feed and stock. In many countries, slaughterhouses are operating at a diminished capacity due to logistical constraints and labour shortages.

I would like to reassure you that preventing the disruption of livestock supply chains, including poultry supply chains, and maintaining access to a safe food supply is of utmost importance for FAO. Livestock and livestock products and other foods need to move across borders with no restrictions, while in compliance with the existing safety measures to protect human health. In this regard, coordination of the inspection and monitoring efforts at the borders is imperative to avoid or minimize exposure to food hazards. Adherence to internationally agreed standards and procedures, adopted by Codex Alimentarius on the basis of robust scientific analysis, is more important than ever. At the same time, it is critical that the welfare of animals is not compromised.

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Mr Robin Horel
President
International Poultry Council
Stone Mountain
Georgia
United States of America

Furthermore, in handling products, it is very important to prevent package contamination by following general food hygiene principles, such as those outlined in the Codex text CAC/RCP 1-1969, in order to minimize the likelihood that food and its packaging become contaminated with infectious agents.

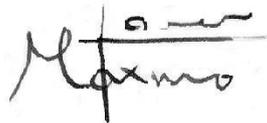
To mitigate the pandemic's impacts on food and agriculture, including livestock, FAO is urging countries to: meet the immediate food needs of their vulnerable populations; boost their social protection programmes; keep food supply chains flowing; gain efficiencies; and aim to reduce costs related to trade. As part of its COVID-19 response, the Organization is providing policy advice, and sharing guidelines and good practices with countries on: ensuring food supply chains' continuity and protection; protecting vulnerable populations' food security and nutrition; food hygiene; and ensuring readiness to rapidly detect SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for COVID-19, in animals and animal products, if need be.

FAO is working closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) to assist member countries and research communities in identifying potential animal hosts of this virus and reduce possible spillover events to humans. The Organization has activated an incident coordination group, which regularly brings together global, regional and country partners to ensure global coordination of activities and communication on the disease from the perspective of animal health and livelihood resilience.

For further updates on FAO's response and messages in relation to COVID-19, I invite you to visit FAO's webpage 'Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak' at www.fao.org/2019-ncov/.

In these challenging times, we look forward to our continued fruitful collaboration to help ensure a safe, sustainable and responsible poultry meat sector for the benefit of all.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Máximo', with a horizontal line drawn across the middle of the signature.

Máximo Torero Cullen
Assistant Director-General
Economic and Social Development Department