

# Food & Farming: well-fed or fed up?

Addressing the disconnect between public perception & sustainable fish, meat, milk & eggs



THE VOICE  
OF THE ANIMAL  
MEDICINES INDUSTRY

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Ensuring sustainable food production is one of the greatest challenges of our times.

There are many varying views as to what this means and in today's society where opinions are formed at breakneck speed, consumer trust and confidence in our food systems is showing some cracks in the shell.

Polarised opinions and views in media reporting, and 74% of Europe's population living in urban areas has led to a disconnect between our food choices and knowledge of how fish, meat, milk and eggs are produced and what nutritious values they carry.

Growing trends, heavily influenced by social media conversations play a key role in driving this disconnect which can in turn impact on the political agenda, sometimes fuelling misperceptions and driving unrealistic expectations of food producers.

Our event aims to offer a forum for open exchange as we ask our speakers to voice their views on the topic of food and farming today in Europe. Are we well-fed or are we quite simply fed up?

## Event Moderator



George was a UK Liberal Democrat MEP for five years and an influential member of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee, working on CAP reform, the EU budget and trade policy. Previously he served as Chief Whip and Deputy Finance Minister in the Scottish Parliament (1999–2007). George also ran a large family farming enterprise and was NFU Scotland President (1997/99), now working as Senior Consultant, Agri-food specialist at Hume Brophy.



AnimalhealthEurope represents companies that research, develop and manufacture veterinary medicines in Europe.



It represents innovators and generics alike, as well as large, medium-sized and small companies.

AnimalhealthEurope's membership covers 90% of the European market for veterinary products.

# Programme

TIMING	TOPICS	SPEAKERS
08:55	Event opening	Roxane Feller, AnimalhealthEurope
09:00	Introduction by moderator	George Lyon, Hume Brophy
09:10	Opening speech: Defining the place of meat in 21st-century diets: science, scientism, or post-truth?	Prof. Frédéric Leroy, VUB
09:35	Keynote speech: The contribution of livestock to sustainable development	Dr. Henning Steinfeld, FAO
10:00	An exchange of views: Trends today, what impact for tomorrow?	
Moderator-led Q&A	<p><i>Are people fed up with our current food system, and what are the reasons? What changes are demanded, and how will they impact?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ariel Brunner, Birdlife – Conservationist</li> <li>• Todor Ivanov, EuroCoop – Cooperatives &amp; consumers</li> <li>• Paula de Vera, Copa Cogeca – Farming association &amp; veterinarian</li> <li>• Frédéric Leroy, VUB – Food &amp; biotechnology scientist</li> </ul>	
11:00–11:25	Coffee break	
11:25	Panel debate: How to uphold facts & science in a world that prefers ‘alternative facts’?	
Setting the scene (15’):	Building a database of livestock facts as a foundation Peer Ederer, Global Food and Agribusiness Network	
11:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Beth Clarke – Research Associate on public perceptions towards animal welfare and meat consumption, Newcastle University</li> <li>• Anna Jones – Agri-journalist, blogger and broadcaster</li> <li>• Frédéric Vincent, Deputy head of unit, DG SANTE Communications, European Commission</li> </ul>	
12:45	Closing speech	Wijnand de Bruijn, AnimalhealthEurope President
13:00–14:00	Networking lunch	



# Roxane Feller

AnimalhealthEurope  
Secretary General

## Bio

Roxane Feller is Secretary General of AnimalhealthEurope. Representing the animal health industry in Europe, the association works to maintain a predictable and responsible competitive market place which stimulates innovation and allows wide and sustainable access to safe, effective and quality veterinary medicines.

Roxane started her career in the area of EU political advocacy in Brussels in 1992 heading up social affairs for the European Sugar Industry before moving on to Copa-Cogeca, the organisation representing European farmers and agri-cooperatives, where she was senior policy officer in charge of all food and feed safety-related issues including animal health and welfare for 14 years.

Prior to joining AnimalhealthEurope in February 2015, Roxane was Director of the Economic Department in FoodDrinkEurope, an umbrella organisation representing the food and drink manufacturing industry in Europe.

Roxane Feller studied in the United States and in Switzerland. She is a lawyer by training and speaks French and English, with an excellent knowledge of German, Spanish and Dutch.

## Thoughts on the matter

In the face of global population growth, increased demand in Europe for animal welfare standards, and commitments to climate actions, we need to ask ourselves what role the EU livestock sector can play in a more sustainable future for Europe. But we first need to recognise how far we've come. Thanks to stringent control measures, adherence to animal health and production rules not only does Europe benefit from some of the highest food safety standards in the world, but we also have a very easy access to an abundance of affordable food products.

Every sector has an obligation to limit its carbon footprint and reduce its emissions, and while European citizens debate what they should and should not be eating, or how much they should be eating, some farmers are right now pioneering new technologies and tools that enable them to produce quality milk, meat, fish and eggs with fewer inputs and resources. As the animal health industry researches and develops new solutions to support this drive for sustainable practices, we are keenly aware of the gulf that exists between perceptions of the food system and the reality for farmers and we believe that a greater awareness of the challenges and potential for livestock as a contributor can help drive a more informed and realistic agenda for improvement.



# Marta Hugas

EFSA Chief Scientist

## Bio

Dr Marta Hugas is serving as Chief Scientist at the European Food Safety Authority. This position addresses the development of EFSA's scientific strategic direction; acting as focal point on scientific matters and facilitating the understanding of science; fostering scientific cooperation as well as leveraging connections and networks for promoting EFSA's research priorities. She joined EFSA in 2003 and since then Marta has held several positions: Head of Biological Hazards Unit (BIOHAZ), Head of the Biological Hazards and Contaminants Unit (BIOCONTAM) and Head of the Risk Assessment and Scientific Assistance Department a.i. (RASA).

Marta holds a BSc in Biological Sciences, an MSc in Genetics and Microbial Biotechnology and a PhD in Food Microbiology from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Prior to joining EFSA, she worked for the Institute for Food and Agricultural Research and Technology (IRTA) in Spain, where she was Head of the Food Microbiology and Biotechnology Unit and led a research group on applied research on meat and food safety. From 1992 to 2004 she was an Associate Professor at the University of Barcelona. Marta's areas of expertise focus on: food hygiene, development of starter and bio protective cultures, probiotics for the safety of poultry meat, emerging preservation technologies, risk assessment of biological hazards and provision of scientific advice to policy makers. Dr Hugas has extensively published peer reviewed papers and book chapters.

## Thoughts on the matter

The world is facing an era characterised by abrupt environmental, technological, social, economic, and political global changes. Some figures: the world population increasing faster than ever; world exports of agricultural products have increased by 70% since 2006; by 2050, 66 % of the world's population is projected to be urban. In the past, goods were transported around the world with ships. The amount and the speed were very limited, and the associated pathogen could not survive. Nowadays goods are moving around the world in a few hours ...

In this complex world, the European Union has designed a food safety system that ensures consumer protection with high standards and that has proved its efficiency for more than 15 years now since the General Food Law was adopted. The WHO FERG report which estimates the global burden of foodborne diseases depicts the EU as the region with the lowest burden of disease globally. However, we should not feel complacent as major challenges still exist ahead of us, antimicrobial resistance being the biggest one.

In this context of complex and rapid changes, people feel threatened. They lose points of reference. The traditional political, social, religious beliefs are swaying. The "Edelmann Trust Barometer" reveals a collapse of the general population's trust, not only in institutions and governments but also in media and NGOs. People believe that the "system" is not working for them. Post-truth politics appeals to this emotional state and prospers. All this poses new challenges but also opportunities, not only to food safety and related risk assessments, but to the whole scientific community involved and to policy makers.

Raising awareness on Food Safety is an important step to move ahead. In this context The World Food Safety Day initiative launched by United Nations General Assembly for the 7th of July, is very welcomed as it shines a spotlight on a key area not only for consumer protection but more broadly to global discussions on sustainability, food security, environment and ultimately enabling trade and economic growth.



# Prof. Frédéric Leroy

Vrije Universiteit  
Brussel – VUB

## *Bio*

After having studied Bio-engineering Sciences (1992–1997), Frédéric Leroy obtained a PhD in Applied Biological Sciences in 2002. Since 2008, he holds a professorship at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel in Belgium. His research is primarily situated in the domain of food science and technology, with a particular focus on food fermentation and animal products. In addition, his research interests relate to human and animal health and well-being, as well as to elements of tradition and innovation in food contexts. The research is often of an interdisciplinary nature, involving collaborations with experts in microbiology, animal production, veterinary sciences, social and consumer sciences, cultural anthropology, psychology, philosophy, and food history. He published over 100 peer-reviewed articles, having attracted over 7k citations (h-index 42).

## *Thoughts on the matter*

The contemporary discourse on diets is polemic, often hijacked by various vested interests and ideologies that tend to place agenda above facts. In parallel, the disconnect of the public from the everyday realities of agriculture and food production is evermore challenging. While the incidence of cardiometabolic illnesses is on the rise, attempts at dietary guidance towards healthier diets are becoming more controversial and autocratic, thus contributing to further polarization. The latter are usually overstating associational, lifestyle-confounded data from epidemiological studies and are based on algorithmic rather than holistic approaches. They penalize such criteria as saturated fat and salt while not only overlooking gastronomic heritage and the broader societal aspects of food, but also the heterogeneity of nutritional responses and the complex metabolic background of human physiology. Whereas some forms of ultra-processing are able to generate “health stars”, because they engineer their way around the criteria, various foods that used to be wholesome are depicted as harmful, particularly so within the group of animal-derived foods. Similar controversies pop up in the debates on sustainable diets, whereby the conclusions are all-too often based on a reductionist set of metrics and refuse to consider context and the full state of the science.

As a result, the tools of dietary policy makers frequently appear as contradictory to common sense, which not only generates feelings of unease and confusion but also scepticism and mistrust within the population. Disorientated individuals may respond with their own set of solutions and ideas, which also stimulates the development of diet fads. The broader context is one of post-truth (declared “an era” in 2004), whereby the scientific method is sub-ordinated to the amassing of information via cherry-picking, invention, and bricolage. To make things worse, the attention economy forces mainstream media to generate click bait in a setting of information overload, driving sensationalism and favouring manipulation by political or social activists.

The climate is one of intolerance to dissident voices, especially in policy-making circles. Criticism generally faces appeal to authority, which paralyzes the debate. This is unfortunate, because a lot of the science underpinning the prevailing approaches is questionable and lacks the robustness needed to support far-reaching interventions in the public at large. Nonetheless, paradigm change is not beyond reach. Social media, for instance, can have a crucial impact and should be considered as such, also by concerned academics that are willing to step in the arena. Proper use of social media can play a role in the democratization of science, the dissemination of scientific insights, and the exposure of vested interests. It also catalyses the emergence of grassroots movements that are critical of the status quo and embrace a return to wholesome diets.



# Dr. Henning Steinfeld

UN Food and Agriculture  
Organization – FAO

## *Bio*

Henning Steinfeld has been Chief of the Livestock Information, Sector Analysis and Policy Branch of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) since 2000. He trained as an agricultural economist at the Technical University of Berlin, was a visiting scholar at Stanford University, and holds an honorary doctorate in veterinary medicine at Uppsala University. Through a varied career, Henning has lived and worked in African countries including Ghana, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Rwanda and has worked extensively in Latin America and Asia. At FAO, he extensively covered social and environmental themes related to global livestock development, bringing attention to emerging issues and working towards developing solutions.

## *Thoughts on the matter*

The UN Sustainable Development Agenda sets out a comprehensive set of Goals that embrace economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. The livestock sector is challenged to respond to this Agenda and to the diverse expectations from different parts of society.

Progress needs to be made in four critical areas. The livestock sector needs to improve its contribution to food and nutrition security by providing healthy food and limiting food–feed competition. Particularly in low income countries, it needs to sustain livelihoods and stimulate economic growth in rural areas. Further improvements need to be made in animal health and animal welfare so as to ensure food safety and consumer acceptance. Finally, the livestock sector needs to lower its environmental footprint, and reduce natural resource use and climate emissions by becoming more efficient and circular.

Substantial improvements can be made in each of these areas, in particular through integrated policies and practices that target multiple objectives. Solutions need to be based on a broad consensus among stakeholders, including consumers.



# Ariel Brunner

BirdLife Europe

## Bio

Based in Brussels, Ariel Brunner is Senior Head of Policy with the environmental NGO BirdLife Europe. He coordinates work on a wide range of EU policies ranging from nature and biodiversity conservation, to climate and energy, fisheries and agriculture.

Over the last decade he has been deeply involved in debates on reform of the Common Agriculture Policy and is widely recognised as prominent expert on the environmental impacts of EU farm policies. He has chaired DG Agriculture's Advisory Group on Agriculture and Environment and has been a member of its Expert group on Public Goods, and of the European Commission's High level steering group on the European Innovation Partnership on agriculture.

In recent years, he has played a leading role in the NatureAlert campaign to defend and achieve better implementation of the EU nature protection legislation. He has been very active in debates over the sustainability of renewable energy and in particular of bioenergy, where he has been one of the pioneers in criticising EU support to biofuels. Over the years, he has been involved in numerous studies, policy developments and political processes linked to the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the EU rural development policy, EU Renewable energy Directives, the sustainability criteria for biofuels, the Indirect Land Use Change controversy, management of hunting etc.

Before moving to Brussels he was following the implementation of EU nature conservation legislation in Italy and has been instrumental to the designation of the country's Special Protection Areas network (sites protected under the EU Wild Birds Directive). He has been involved in species conservation projects, legal battles for the conservation of protected sites and in efforts to improve implementations of hunting legislation. Born in Israel, he holds an M.Sc. in Environmental Sciences at Milan University.

## Thoughts on the matter

Ever more people are realising that something is profoundly wrong in our food and farming system. The IPBES and IPCC reports paint an alarming picture that cannot be ignored any more. We are facing an unprecedented ecological crisis that risks destroying our civilisation within our lifetime. Agriculture is at the heart of the crisis as the number one cause of biodiversity collapse and the number two driver of climate breakdown. While our current agriculture production provides plentiful and safe food for those who can afford it, it still fails too many of the poor, it drives an epidemic of non-transmittable diseases and it is simply not tenable ecologically. Livestock production, and meat and dairy consumption are proven to be the biggest source of pressure on ecosystems, though self-defeating bioenergy subsidies, food waste and other drivers are also at play. The time for change is now. Change later will be much more painful for everyone, and might come too late.

The EU's common Agricultural Policy, the world's biggest system of farm subsidies, could represent a huge driver for the ecological transition. Instead it is a perverse system locking farmers into business as usual and accelerating the march towards ecological points of no return. What is needed is becoming ever clearer: a massive reduction in overall consumption, particularly of meat and dairy. A serious fight against food waste. An end to the use of land for bioenergy. A comprehensive shift of agriculture production towards agro-ecological practices. A shift away from heavy reliance on pesticides and synthetic fertilisers. Large scale investments in restoration of natural ecosystems to bring back biodiversity and carbon sinks. Such a holistic policy shift is possible and it would offer huge opportunities to improve health and nutrition, social justice and fairness, as well as pulling us back from the brink. It would also offer great opportunities to farmers and companies ready to innovate and change. But it does require overcoming the vested interests that are milking the current system and that are ready to put their existing business models before the wellbeing, and even survival of humanity.





# Todor Ivanov

EuroCoop

## Bio

Todor is Secretary General of Euro Coop – the European Community of Consumer Co-operatives, simultaneously Secretary General of Consumer Co-operatives Worldwide (CCW) since January 2014. He leads the Secretariat's advocacy and representation activities with the EU institutions and continuously looks to create conditions for meaningful intermember collaboration.

Ivanov started his career in the Central Cooperative Union – Bulgaria, where he worked as a Senior Expert in the International Affairs Department and later as Director of the Co-operative Policy Department. He holds a PhD in Organisation and Management of Consumer Co-operatives.

## Thoughts on the matter

People are generally acknowledging that much has been done over the last decades to make enough food available at affordable prices to a large part of the European population and that this should be welcome as a success as such. Now, of course the way this has been achieved has come at a high price, especially in terms of quality degradation and environmental damage. I see these as the most widespread complaints when it comes to our food system, and efforts to change it should first and foremost tackle these two points. There are not quick fixes but a general trend correction which embraces quality over quantity, full traceability, shorter supply chains and stringent environmental standards in a circular economy perspective is definitely the way forward.

In terms of changes a true circular economy thinking – where nothing should be referred to as “waste” but rather a new resource to re-enter the economy circle – is crucial in this respect. Other points include:

- A gradual shift from quantity to quality;
- An increase in local production to reduce long and complex supply chains whilst ensuring full traceability and transparency to the consumer;
- A better integration of the livestock sector in the circular bioeconomy. This can be achieved for example by increasing the share of by-products or waste that humans cannot eat in the livestock feed ration or by recycling and recovering nutrients and energy from animal waste (e.g. biogas);
- Investment in technology & innovation. For example, in the livestock sector I believe that probably technology and innovation could give the most immediate results when it comes to feed production (e.g. different mixes in forage) and enteric fermentation (e.g. optimizing feed digestibility and availability), which alone represents 30% of global methane emissions.



# Paula de Vera

Copa Cogeca

## Bio

Paula De Vera García (Madrid, Spain) graduated in Veterinary Medicine in the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and after she did a Master Degree in Animal Health and Production, specializing in production of Ruminants.

Since October 2018 she is Junior Policy Advisor at Copa–Cogeca in Brussels, the union of the two big agricultural organizations and the strongest advocacy group for European farmers. Copa–Cogeca’s mission is to: Defend the general interest of agriculture, maintain and develop relations with EU–institutions as well as with representative organizations at EU level and find solutions that are in the common interest.

## Thoughts on the matter

Lately, there has been an increasing concern and interest from the consumers side to reshape our food system. Following this trend, the EU institutions are already considering alternatives to the current food systems in the EU.

The institutions are considering more circular and sustainable food systems, and they are following also the trend of “zero–pesticides” agriculture, which for the time being has been proven as something that is unachievable. Mainly, given the future challenge that comes with guaranteeing food security and healthy food for 11 billion people worldwide by 2100.

One of the issues that affects our food systems nowadays is the rise of some “anti–science” movements that may compromise science–based assessments in the food chain and science–based decision making. But the science–based approach is what differentiates the EU food system quality from other parts of the world and we want it to be an added value to EU food production.

Following this, the importance of food and feed safety are not spoken about anymore, but they are pillars that we cannot compromise and they must remain a pre–condition in any food system if we want to deliver safe, nutritious and high–quality food to the consumers.



# Peer Ederer

Global Food and Agribusiness Network

## Bio

Peer Ederer is a scientist and an entrepreneur. As scientist, he researches, publishes and teaches on the links between innovation, learning and growth. He is particularly active in the food and agribusiness sector, where he is the program and science director of the Global Food and Agribusiness Network, which is supported by the Swiss/Chinese CEIBS. His analyses are frequently consulted by business leaders and policy makers for their innovation and growth strategies. As entrepreneur in his company africa enablers, his commercial focus is on creating sustainable and cost effective energy, data and infrastructure solutions for countries across the African continent.

Peer Ederer has conducted business in Africa since 2005. He started his career as a financial trader at Deutsche Bank in Japan in 1989, then worked for McKinsey & Company for five years, before returning to the sciences. Peer Ederer studied business administration at Sophia University in Tokyo and at Harvard Business School in Boston, where he graduated with honors. He completed his PhD in financial economics and holds a part time professorship at Zeppelin University in Germany.

## Thoughts on the matter

Fact = “A thing that is known or proved to be true” according to the Oxford English Dictionary. How can we know whether something is “true”. In many cases, we cannot be sure. But some facts can be presented and arranged in such a way that they will have a higher degree of reliability, than others.

**There are three necessary hallmarks of reliability of truth – and only if all three are combined:**

- a) Presentation in mathematical/numerical form
- b) Transparent replicability of both sources, data material and analysis
- c) Embedded in a MECE–framework: Mutually Exclusive / Comprehensively Exhaustive

**What are NOT hallmarks of reliability of truth:**

- a) If a famous person creates or endorses the facts
- b) If the majority creates or endorses the facts
- c) If scientists create or endorse the facts, even if they are peer–reviewed
- d) If public authorities create or endorse the facts
- e) If media reports the facts

The need for building an observatory with facts on the importance of animal sourced foods, is NOT because we need more facts. There are enough “facts” floating around. The need for building an observatory is there, because we need more facts that are tested for reliability, and we need an openly accessible place where only such reliability–tested facts are presented, and where the reliability tests are made transparent. Over time, such a place can then become a resource for such participants in the market place, which are interested in reliable facts.



# Dr. Beth Clarke

Newcastle University

## Bio

Beth is a member of the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle University, based in the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences. Beth is a social scientist with an interest in farm animal welfare and human-animal relations. Her background is a mix of natural and social sciences, having degrees in nutrition and marketing. Beth's PhD focused on how the public perceive intensive animal production systems as part of the PROHEALTH project (<http://www.fp7-prohealth.eu/>). Her current research extends this, looking to explore stakeholder perceptions of farm animal welfare, animal health and endemic livestock disease, as part of the FIELD project ([www.field-wt.uk](http://www.field-wt.uk)). Her research involves working with a range of stakeholders from across the food supply chain, including policy makers, primary producers, manufacturers and the public, not to mention academics from a variety of different disciplines including geography, history, economics, epidemiology, nutrition and animal science.

## Thoughts on the matter

PROHEALTH was a 5 year EU funded project involving 22 partners (10 academic and 12 industry). The project looked to explore production diseases in intensive pig and poultry production systems, examining the multi-factorial aspects including; the animal, the environment in which they are kept, and the pathogens involved. PROHEALTH developed protocols and treatments for the control of production diseases in pigs and poultry. These were tested for their social acceptability with a variety of stakeholders including citizens and consumers, and for their economic consequences. This holistic approach is unique for the development of integrated strategies that address the challenge of animal health in a societally acceptable way. I was involved in the socio-economic work package, which looked to explore the cost and acceptance of different strategies to control endemic (production) disease. This encompassed two literature reviews and a largescale public survey (n=2,330) of 5 European countries.

The findings show that the public have concerns about intensive production systems, potentially in relation to concerns about animal welfare standards, linked to the requirement for humane treatment and naturalness within animal husbandry. The acceptability of interventions to prevent animal diseases in production systems were linked to these concerns, with the public indicating greater preferences for more proactive interventions utilising housing and hygiene strategies. The use of medicine based interventions raised concerns in relation to food safety, human and health and antimicrobial resistance.

Industry and policymakers need to consider these concerns in future policy recommendations, potentially applying a combination of market and policy based solutions to align consumer preferences for FAW with standards applied within intensive animal production systems. Whilst legislation will ensure interventions deliver safe food, the results highlight the need for effective communication and knowledge exchange with all stakeholders involved in the supply chain, including the public.



# Anna Jones

Agri-journalist

## Bio

Anna Jones is a freelance journalist, broadcaster, farmer's daughter and Nuffield Farming Scholar. She covered rural affairs at the BBC for 12 years; directing BBC One's Countryfile, producing and presenting Radio 4's Farming Today, On Your Farm and Costing the Earth and reporting on agricultural issues for BBC News and the World Service. She has written for The Guardian, Countryfile Magazine, Farmers Guardian and Farmers Weekly.

Anna's career took an unexpected turn after her Nuffield Farming Scholarship, which looked at how the media portrays farming and country life to the public. She travelled the world and discovered a deep disconnect between the metropolitan mainstream media and a distrustful and defensive farming industry.

It made Anna determined to motivate farmers to step up and share their stories. She left the BBC in 2018 to set up a communications project called 'Just Farmers', aimed at connecting journalists and programme makers with independent voices at the grassroots of farming. She travels all over the world talking about her mission to improve openness and transparency in modern agriculture.

## Thoughts on the matter

I have been telling stories about farming, the environment and rural affairs for 13 years; in print, on radio and on television. In that time agriculture's mainstream profile – and the narrative surrounding it – has changed profoundly. When I started out, farming was viewed as a very niche specialist subject for a journalist; somewhat quaint, charming and 'fluffy'. Farmers, by contrast, were viewed as a distant and different breed. Rich, privileged landowners disconnected from the rest of society. Today, farming occupies a more combative space. It has a higher public profile and more people are interested in food – eating it, debating it, 'tribalising' it. However, I also believe the public feels closer to farmers, they're more interested in what they have to say. They want to see them, and their farms.

My fundamental point is – there is a difference between farmers and farming in the eyes of the media, and the public. The problem is many farmers don't see it. They feel constantly attacked and vilified; public enemy number one. They take criticism of their industry deeply personally. Their instinctive defensiveness is not helped by farm unions and trade associations which stoke this narrative of "agriculture under attack".

I set up Just Farmers to achieve two things:

- 1) To build confidence among farmers and growers about talking to the media.
- 2) To help journalists and programme makers, with limited rural contacts, find independent, authentic voices at the grassroots of farming.

My aim? To encourage the media to look beyond the end of its nose and engage more diverse voices in their coverage, instead of falling back on the same sources again and again. To show the human face of farming. To surprise people with something different to binary debates. To help people see what farming is really like.

Just Farmers is less than a year old and Phase One of the project is farmer recruitment. I want a solid foundation of trained farmer communicators before I start promoting our website (which acts as a free farmer directory) to members of the media. However! Without any promotion, purely on word-of-mouth, half of our first group of farmers have already been interviewed. I don't know how the media is finding us, but they are. We have 24 national and regional UK journalists registered on the Just Farmers website, contacting our farmers for background research or on-the-record interviews. Our farmers have been interviewed on national radio and television, featured in a groundbreaking Climate Coalition report and three of them have been approached by a major new observational documentary series for casting discussions. It's working without us even trying. Imagine what we can achieve when we focus all our energy on engaging with the media!



# Frédéric Vincent

European Commission

## *Bio*

Frédéric Vincent is the Deputy–Head of Unit of DG SANTE’s Communication Unit .

He’s been working on communication issues for the European Commission for more than 15 years, on various files including Education & Culture, and, in more recent years, Public Health & Food.

He was the spokesperson in charge of Health & Consumer Policy between 2010 and 2014.

In his current position, he contributes to DG SANTE’s media actions and communication on food files, and in particular pesticides, GMOs, animal health and welfare, and additives.

## *Thoughts on the matter*

The Commission, and in particular DG SANTE, manages standards for food and feed products which are crucial to the functioning of the EU’s economy since their free circulation are at the heart of the Single Market. The Commission’s legislation and policies in these areas are linked to authorisations of substances and products for which agencies – like EFSA – carry out assessments, followed by decisions to be taken with the Member States at risk management stage via various Committees.

Stringent risk assessment before products are being put on the market, on the ground controls by national and EU authorities and a functioning rapid alert system all contribute to the safety of the food chain here in Europe, making sure that EU citizens probably enjoy the highest food standards in the world. And it’s a worthwhile effort given that, on a global scale, it is estimated that 600 million fall ill and 420 000 die every year from eating food contaminated with bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxins or chemicals. In an increasingly global world, even local food safety or animal health concerns can have wide reaching consequences. So are we doing enough to meet citizens’ expectations?

As shown in the past by the GMOs dossier, or more recently by the debate on glyphosate, these files can be very sensitive and generate massive press coverage as well as reactions on social media. Repeated and often conflicting headlines in the media can then lead to questions about the reliability of the facts or scientific rationale for political decisions. One example is the European Citizens Initiative calling for more transparency of the risk assessment of the food chain. After registering 1,070,865 signatures from concerned citizens, the Commission responded with a proposal to overhaul the General Food Law, which was welcomed across the board, including by the Parliament, Council and the initiators of the ECI. There are currently three more on–going Citizens Initiatives related to food and they are all linked to labelling and transparency.

All this confirms that food safety is a priority for EU citizens but that explaining what is at stake, ensuring that decisions are well understood and that myths are properly debunked are challenges that are here to stay.



# Wijnand de Bruijn

AnimalhealthEurope  
President

## *Bio*

Wijnand de Bruijn is CEO Business at Dopharma and was appointed vice-president for AnimalhealthEurope in 2015. He previously worked for Dopharma as Head of Sales and Head of Public Relations before taking up the position of CEO Business in 2002. Prior to that, he was the General Manager of Anisane, a former subsidiary of Dopharma.

De Bruijn is a member of FIDIN, the association representing the animal health industry in The Netherlands, which he chaired between 2010 and 2012. He is also a member of VETbase, a foundation to encourage a veterinary, sector wide, competition neutral, communication platform and information sharing – vetCIS.

A Dutch national, he studied business administration at an Agricultural College and at the InterCollege in The Hague. A keen cyclist, he lives in Belgium with his wife and 2 dogs.

## *Thoughts on the matter*

The opportunity for progress in livestock farming is often complicated by controversy and uncertainty surrounding different production practices. As a key input sector for animal production in Europe, responding to consumer concerns about animal welfare, environmental impacts, antibiotic resistance, etc. is a central focus of the animal medicines industry. We're not in the business of making excuses, we're in the business of offering solutions, and working to ensure that those solutions are made available to farmers all across Europe.

This is why we promote a better animal health management approach focusing on disease prevention and animal resilience as well as earlier diagnosis to facilitate better interventions and responsible use of medicines. Improved health management in any production system, from organic to larger-scale modern farms, can respond in part to consumer concerns by ensuring efficient conversion of feed and water, etc. into affordable and quality, fish, meat, milk and eggs while ensuring close attention to the animal's welfare.

Polarised conversations on the topic of food and farming and a highly urbanised population means our society is more and more disconnected from where and how food is produced, and the rapidity of social media messaging generates an enormous source of influence on what we should and should not believe, eat, drink, do, etc. A 2015 study showed that a mere 0.3% of these conversations are driven by agricultural stakeholders. What our event aims to do is challenge food chain stakeholders to be open to exchanges and to tell their story.



THE VOICE  
OF THE ANIMAL  
MEDICINES INDUSTRY



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